

# starting out: the english

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EVERYMAN CHESS

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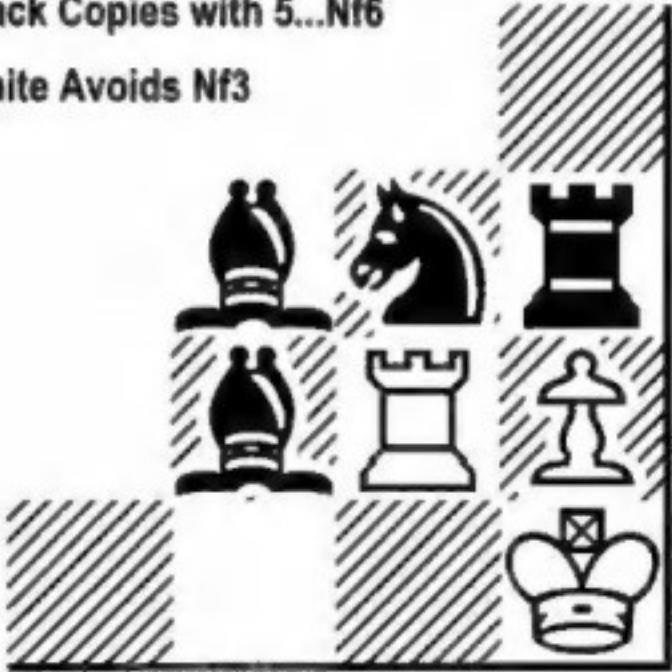
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## Chapter One

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# Symmetrical English 1: Black's Kingside Fianchetto

- Introduction
- Black Seizes Space in the Centre
- Black Defends the d5-square
- Black Copies with 5...Nf6
- White Avoids Nf3



## Starting Out: The English

### Introduction

The Symmetrical Variation begins 1 c4 c5. Black prevents White from playing 2 d4 and so ensures that the game stays in English Opening territory.

In this Chapter we look at lines where Black fianchettos on g7. In Chapter Two Black avoids ...Bg7 in favour of immediate action in the centre and in Chapter Three we analyse the so called Hedgehog, which is characterised by Black setting up a mini centre with pawns e6, d6 and e5.

**NOTE:** The analysis in this chapter is mainly built around the position reached after 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Ne3. Lines in which White prefers to delay Nf3 or play Nge2 are considered at the end of the chapter. Any early decision to break the symmetry by White or Black, such as 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4, is considered in the next chapter.

#### 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3

White's choice of second move in the English can be of critical importance. It is worth remembering that lots of games begin with the Réti move order 1 Nf3, which means White has already committed his knight. The reason for 1 Nf3 is that White wants to rule out the Four Knights Variation beginning 1 c4 e5. On the other hand, playing 1 Nf3 takes away some flexibility from White's build-up.

For most of this chapter we assume play has begun 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3, but in the final part we look at other methods for White. Elsewhere in the book 2 Nc3 is sometimes preferred, for example versus the King's Indian set-up and the Four Knights. And 2 g3? also has its merits and is the move order suggested versus 1...c6 – see Chapter Eight.

#### 2...Nc6

Black consistently strengthens his hold on the important d4-square.

#### 3 g3

Meanwhile White aims his pieces at the d5-square.

#### 3...g6

There is an endless number of different move orders in the English. If, for example, Black wants to launch a quick assault with ...d7-d5 he could play 3...Nf6 4 Nc3 d5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 here, which should soon transpose to the 5...Nf6 6 0-0 d5 line discussed later in this chapter.

#### 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Ne3 (Diagram 1)

Black can carry on copying White with 5...Nf6 or he can break the symmetry with either 5...e6 or 5...e5. We'll look at all three approaches in reverse order in this chapter.



Diagram 1  
Decision time



Diagram 2  
The fight for the d5-square

## Black Seizes Space in the Centre

5...e5!?

The first thing we notice about this move is that it leaves a hole in Black's pawn structure on d5.



**NOTE:** In chess terminology, a hole is a square of strategical importance in a player's pawn structure that can no longer be defended by a pawn.

Here Black has a hole on d5 as he can no longer bolster the square with ...c7-c6 or ...e7-e6. As this hole is right in the centre of the board and on the diagonal of the bishop on g2, it seems a serious concession. It would be a dream outpost for a white knight, while a bishop can exert pressure from a distance – for instance the bishop can target b7 whether it is sitting on g2 or d5, whereas a knight acts at shorter range and so is particularly effective on a centre square where it is free from attack by enemy pawns.

So why does Black create a weakness on d5? Despite the hole on d5 Black judges that his centre has more stability after 5...e5. He strengthens his grip on the d4-square and prevents White from counter-attacking with d2-d4, a move which might occur even as a sacrifice after the alternative 5...e6. And, if allowed, Black will advance ...d6-d5 to conquer space in the centre and remove the hole.

Regarding the weakness on d5 itself, here I recall a paradoxical remark by Aaron Nimzowitsch, one of the great chess thinkers of the 20th century. In his book *My System* he talks about the concept of overprotection – that is, you guard a key centre square with far more pieces than necessary and, in doing so, ‘by accident’ the pieces find themselves well placed when the moment arrives later in the game to decide on a plan. Nimzowitsch extended this idea by asserting that

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having a weakness in your central pawn structure makes it easier to find the best squares for your pieces – you can't do better than bolster up a weak centre square. Here Black has given himself a hole on d5, so that suggests he should play ...d7-d6 and then ...Be6 – the bishop finds its best square for all sorts of plans, and all in the name of defending d5!

**TIP: If Black achieves ...d6-d5 safely he will free his game.**

### 6 d3

A strong case can be made for the immediate 6 a3! here. Then experience has shown that 6...d6 7 0-0 Nge7 8 b4! exb4 9 axb4 Nxb4 10 Ba3 gives White a dangerous initiative for the pawn. He has Benko-like pressure against Black's queenside with potential pawn targets = a7, b7 and d6. Therefore Black should probably play 6...a5, to prevent the expansion b2-b4. So in one sense it could be argued that White has gained a move, as in the main line he provokes ...a7-a5 with a2-a3 and Rb1, whereas here it has only taken a2-a3. However, it isn't clear what White's plan should be if he doesn't stick the rook on b1. On this useful square it might support a future b2-b4 with the help of a knight after the manoeuvre Ne1 and Nc2.

Finally, mention should be made of a wild possibility for White after 6...a5, namely 7 d4! – an 'impossible' move as d4 is covered twice, but 7...exd4 8 Nb5 d6 9 e3 is the idea, clearing the way for an attack on d6. Black's best response is the cold-blooded 9...Be6 10 exd4 Bxc4, which seems to destroy most of White's initiative.

### 6...Nge7! (Diagram 2)

After the natural 6...Nf6 White gets the chance to pin the knight with 7 Bg5. He is then happy to play Bxf6, even though he is giving up a bishop for a knight, as it allows him to win control of the d5-square, for example 7...d6 8 0-0 h6 (or else the pin is awkward) 9 Bxf6 Bxf6 10 Nd2 and White, who has lovely control of the light squares in the centre, is ready to play 11 Ndf. You can see that the bishop on f6 is a poorer piece than the white knights as it cannot fight for control of d5 and is blocked in by the e5-pawn. If pawns could move backwards Black would love to play 10...e6 here, when the d5-square is defended and the diagonal is opened for his bishop!

**WARNING: pawns can never move backwards, so beware of thoughtless pawn moves!**

### 7 Rb1 0-0 8 a3 a5!

Black gives himself a second hole on b5 but there is no way for White to exploit it. It is much more important that he prevents White undermining the c5-square with b2-b4.

**TIP: A hole or any other structural fault is only a weakness if it can be attacked.**

### 9 Bg5!



White still hopes that he can exchange bishop for knight with  $Bxe7$ .  
 $9...f6!$

Again Black is prepared to accept a loosening of his pawn structure in order to preserve his hold on the square that really matters – d5. White's main idea is frustrated but he can retreat the bishop, happy that he has forced ...f7-f6, which isn't a move Black would have willingly played were it not for a higher positional motive.

### III Be3! (Diagram 3)



Diagram 3  
The bishop prevents ...d7-d5

Who says that a dark-squared bishop can't fight for a light square? Here the bishop prevents ...d6-d5 because of the attack on c5. After 10 Bd2 d6 11 0-0 Be6 12 Ne1 d5 13 exd5 Nxd5 Black would have achieved his aim.

## Theoretical?

Not really; the lines after 5...e6 are straightforward to play as both colours, with clear strategical ideas. You don't need to know many variations.

Let's look at a couple of games. In the first White wins in fine positional style, while in the second he meets much tougher resistance.

Game 1

□ Andersson ■ Seirawan

Linares 1983

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Nc3 e6

I have repeatedly 'tidied up' the move order of the illustrative games in this book so that they all begin 1 e4. The actual move order in the game was 1 Nf3 c5 2 e4 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Nc3 e5. But watch out if you try this as Black as 2 e4! would mean you are holding the wrong book. Of course Seirawan was aware that Ulf Andersson, one of

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the finest exponents of flank openings, would never play a risky move like 2 e4.

### 6 0-0 ill

Here too the players diverge slightly from the theoretical line given above with these sixth moves. However, the nature of the position doesn't change and the ideas remain the same.

**7 a3 Nge7 8 Rb1 a5 9 d3 0-0 10 Bg5 f6 11 Be3 Be6 12 Ne1**

White's plan is to play Nc2 to support the b2-b4 advance.

**12...Qd7??**

In the next game 12...b6?? is examined. The plan adopted by Seirawan here allows White the better chances. Indeed Andersson's phenomenal play makes it almost look like a forced win for White!

**13 Nc2 (Diagram 4)**



Diagram 4  
White prepares b2-b4



Diagram 5  
The knight returns to c2

**13...a4**

This is the idea: White cannot allow the queenside to be fixed, so he has to accept an isolated pawn on a3. However, it will turn out that this pawn will have a glorious career. In contrast the black pawn on b7 proves far more of a target.

**14 b3 axb3 15 Rxb3 Rfb8 16 Qb1 Ra4**

White would prefer his rook on b2 rather than b3, as it would be out of the range of ...Nd4 from Black, or the bishop on e6 if Black advanced ...d6-d5. Here's how Andersson arranges this:

**17 Rb6! Qc7 18 Rb2**

Now the black queen has been cajoled into leaving d7, where she would support a ...d6-d5 advance. White is happy to have swapped the move Rb2 for ...Qc7.

**18...b6?**

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**28...f4 29 Kh2!**

Not letting Black gain any freedom with 29..Bh3.

**29...Kh7 30 Nbd5**

Only now does Anderson go after the b6-pawn. You can only admire his patience.

**30...Nxd5 31 cxd5 Bf5 32 Qxb6 Rc5 33 a5 Rdc8 34 Rb3 fxg3+ 35 fxg3 e4**

A desperate move as the a-pawn was going to march through.

**36 Nxe4 Rc2 37 Qe3 Qa4 38 Rb7**

Killing off the flurry of counterplay with the threat of 39 Qxh6+.

**38...R8c7 39 Rxc7 Rxc7 40 Nxd6 Re2 41 Nxf5 1-0**

White has four pawns for the exchange. White wins easily after, for instance, 41...gxf5 42 d6.

Game 2

□ O.Bjarnason ■ De Firmian

Reykjavík 2000

**1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Ne3 e5**

Here the move order was actually 1 Nf3 e5 2 g3 Nc6 3 Bg2 g6 4 c4 Bg7 5 Ne3 e5

**6 d3 Nge7 7 Rb1 0-0 8 a3 a5 9 Bg5 Nf 10 Be3 d6 11 0-0 Be6 12 Ne1 b6!?** (Diagram 6)



**Diagram 6**  
Black prepares ...d6-d5



**Diagram 7**  
Black attacks

This defends c5 again and now reintroduces the positional idea of ...d5-d6. White feels obliged to prevent this.

**13 Nd5 Re8**

Tactics! White threatened 14 Nxe7+, winning the exchange.

**14 Ne2 Nd4!**

Preparing a sequence of exchanges that liberates Black's position.

**15 Bxd4 Bxd5!**

Better than 15...cxd4 16 Nxe7+Qxe7 17 b4.

**16 Bxd5+**

After 16 cxd5 cxd4 the pawn ~~on~~ d5 is cut off from its comrades.

**16...Nxd5 17 Be3 Ne7?**

A horrible positional mistake would be 17...Nxc3 18 bxc3, when the rook on b1 suddenly has the open b-file and White has the positional threat of 18 Ne3 and Nd5. Note if Black did blunder like this his best defensive move would be 18...Bb6?, to answer 18 Ne3? with 18...Bxe3.

**18 e4**

To stop ...d6-d5. The exchange of light squared bishops has taken all the pressure off Black's centre. Therefore Black can begin to play aggressively on the kingside.

**18...f5 19 f3 Qd7 20 b4 axb4 21 axb4 ~~■■■■~~ 22 bxc5 bxc5 23 Kg3 Rcf8 24 Rh6?**

White refuses to admit he has lost the initiative and carries on playing actively on the queenside. Instead a defensive move like 24 Qe2, or 24 Ne3 followed by 25 Nd5 would hold the balance. After all, Black's minor pieces aren't anything special.



**WARNING: It's sure way to lose is to carry on attacking when you should be thinking about defending!**

**24...h5! (Diagram 7)**

A typical move in such situations. Black utilises his h-pawn as a battering ram.

**25 Qb1?**

The logical continuation of his plan to break through on the queen-side. Nevertheless it leaves the f3-square weak. It wasn't too late to play 25 Ne3 or 25 Qe2.

**25...fxe4 26 dx e4 h4**

Now 27...h3+ is a big threat, winning the f3-pawn. White thinks he has found the answer, but it allows a winning tactic. Clearly he underestimated the danger right until the moment he had to resign.

**27 g4? Rx f3! 0-1**

Black wins easily after 28 Rx f3 Qxg4+.

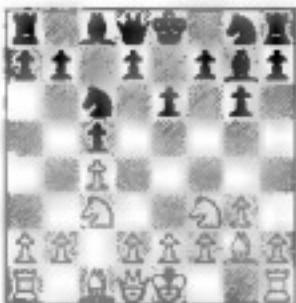
## Black Defends the d5-square

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Ne3 e6 (Diagram 8)**

Black defends the d5-square and plans smooth development with ...Nge7, ...O-O and then ...d7-d5. Once Black has played these moves he will have a very solid position. Therefore White has experimented with a bold sacrifice to exploit the temporal disadvantage of 5...e6:

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that is, Black has weakened the d5-square and failed to develop the king's knight.



**Diagram 8**  
Black prepares ...Nge7

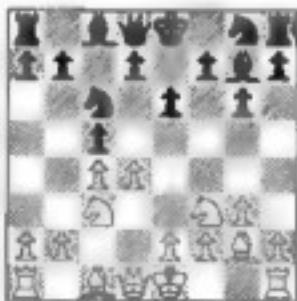
## Theoretical?

You need to look at the sharp response 6 d4: knowledge of concrete theory is necessary here. But assuming you learn this line there isn't much to fear ■ Black.

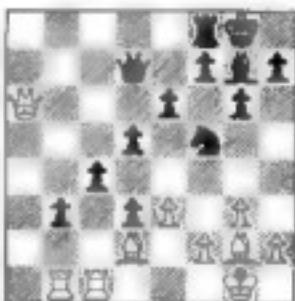
### Game 3

□ T.Marcowski ■ B.Maciejko  
Warsaw 1998

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Ne3 e6 6 d4? (Diagram 9)



**Diagram 9**  
White sacrifices a pawn



**Diagram 10**  
Pawn Power!

White can't expect much (if any) advantage after the solid 6 0-0 Nge7

7 d3 0-0 8 Bg5 h6! (not allowing the exchange of bishops after Qc1 and Bh6, when Black's dark squares might become weak) 9 Bd2 d5 and Black has nothing to fear.

In contrast the gambit in the game is very tricky.

6...Nxd4 7 Nxd4 cxd4 8 Nb6 Qb6

Defending d4 and d6 but leaving the queen on a potentially exposed square – see the next note.

8 Qe4

The immediate 9 e3 gives White nothing after 9...Ne7 10 Nxd4 0-0 11 0-0 d5 12 cxd5 Nxd5.

9...a6

Straightforward development with 9...Ne7? falls for 10 Bf4 e6 11 c6! Qd8 (or 11...Qxc5 12 Re1 and the check on c7 will be fatal) 12 Nd6+ Kf8 13 Qc4 and Black has no good way to defend f7.

10 e3 d3

Black keeps the position blocked. Completely wrong would be 10...dxe3? 11 Bxe3 Qd8 12 Nd6+.

11 0-0 Ne7 12 Rd1

White hopes to regain the pawn with 13 Rxd3 with a good position due to his pressure on the d-file and the passive black bishop on c8. But now it is Black's turn to sacrifice...

12...axb5! 13 Qxa8 bxc4

The doomed pawn on d3 has suddenly become a protected passed pawn. Black has great compensation for the exchange.

14 Rb1 0-0 15 Bd2 d5 16 Rde1 Qc7 17 Qa3 Qd7?

Black was afraid of 17...Qxd3, but a better answer to this threat was 17...Ne6, when Macieja gives a lot of analysis in Informator 74 to show that Black has a clear advantage after 18 b3 b5 19 Qc5 Bd7 20 e4 Rb8? etc.

18 b3 b5 19 Qc5 Nf5 20 a4 Ba6 21 Qb6?

Now it is White's turn to go wrong. He had to break up the pawns with 21 axb5.

21...bxa4!!

A brilliant positional sacrifice. The mass of passed pawns will be worth more than a rook!

22 Qxa6 axb3 (Diagram 10) 23 Qa5 Rb8 24 Bc3 Qb6!

**TIP: Queens are tricky pieces, so when you have a winning long term advantage the exchange of queens is often the best way to kill off any counterplay.**



25 Qxb5 Rxb5 26 Bxg7 Kxg7 27 Bf1

White's only hope now is to sacrifice his king's bishop on d3 to break up the pawns. If Black had played accurately he could have prevented

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this defence.

27-Nds 28 F3 Rh4?

Black doesn't quite realise how strong his passed pawns are. Here he missed the brilliant 28...d2 29 Rd1 c3! 30 Bxb5 Nxb5 when the rook and three connected passed pawns overwhelm the rooks (for example 31 Rxh3 c2 32 Rbb1 Ne3!).

29 Rb2 Nb6

Here 29...e5 would have made things harder for White.

30 Bxd3! exd3 31 Rd1 Na3 32 Rxd3 Nc4 33 Rdxh3 Rxh3 34 Rxh3 Nd2 35 Rb4 Nxg3+ 36 Kf2 Ng5 37 Ke2

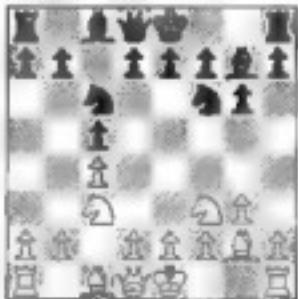
The result of all the excitement is an endgame with very slight winning chances for Black, but it finished as a draw after 64 moves. A highly eventful game.

**Black Copies with 5...NFS**

### Theoretical?

Yes. Bobby Fischer has played this variation as both colours, while Garry Kasparov has adopted it several times as Black. Need I say more about the depth of the research that has gone into this variation?

In order to keep things clearer we shall assume that the opening sequence is the 'copying' 1 c4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Ne3 Nf6 (Diagram 11).



**Diagram 11**  
a. copy tail position

However, in reality, as soon as Black plays 1...c5, both players begin wondering about the best moment to break the symmetry. They might copy each other's moves for some time but sooner or later someone will make a bid to gain space in the centre. Thus as early as move

three White might try 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4, or Black might opt for 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Ne3 d5. Such early divergences are considered in Chapter Two. However, in most cases despite the early differences in move order, one of the following two scenarios will be reached after nine moves.

Starting from the diagram above:

### Scenario 1

6 d4 exd4 7 Nxd4 0-0 8 0-0 Nxd4 9 Qxd4 d6 (Diagram 12)

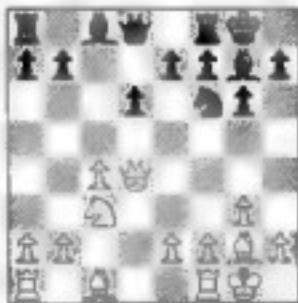


Diagram 12  
Scenario 1



Diagram 13  
Scenario 2

### Scenario 2

6 0-0 d5 7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Nxd5 Qxd5 9 d3 0-0 (Diagram 13)

In both scenarios we see a queen sitting in the centre, controlling a number of squares but in danger of a discovered attack from the enemy king's bishop, which is, of course, delighted to have such a big piece in its sights, and is also looking beyond the queen to an attack on other pieces along the diagonal. White's extra tempo in Scenario 2 makes the pressure from the bishop more potent.

The pawn on c4 in Scenario 1 confers a space advantage on White, but is slightly vulnerable; the same could be said about the pawn on c5 in Scenario 2, except that it is even more of a potential target as White has the advantage of an extra move to begin an attack on it. Nevertheless, if nothing nasty befalls the c4 (or c5) pawn and the queen manages to evacuate the danger diagonal without conceding a weakness in the pawn structure, then the player who has advanced d2-d4 or ...d7-d5 can look forward to a game in which all his pieces are actively placed and he has a space advantage.

**TIP:** If you like a space advantage as White, advance d2-d4. If you prefer to attack in centre from the wings, wait for Black to play ...d7-d5.

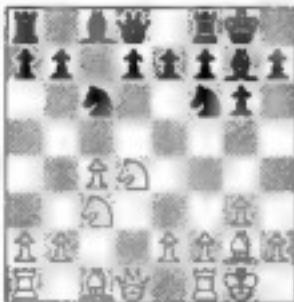


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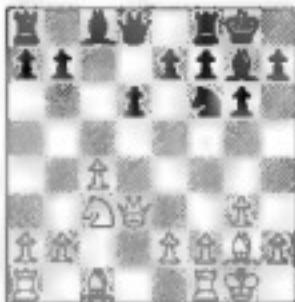
Now we'll look at developments from the two Scenarios.

### Scenario One: Black Sacrifices the b7-pawn

The diagram position below is reached after 1 c4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Ne3 Nc6 4 g3 g6 5 Bg2 Bg7 6 d4 cxd4 7 Nxd4 0-0 B 0-0 (Diagram 14)



**Diagram 14**  
Black offers a pawn



**Diagram 15**  
White's queen is busy

Now usual is 8...Nxd4, as given in the Scenario One sequence, below, but Black has occasionally given up a pawn to take over the initiative on the queenside and facilitate his development by opening lines: 8...d6? 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 Bxc6 Rb8. In return for the pawn he has the open b-file for his rook, whose pressure on **b8** prevents the immediate development of White's queen's bishop. Furthermore, the c4-pawn can be subjected to a rapid attack with ...Be6 or ...Qc7 – in the last case Black exploits the loosely placed bishop on c6. Topalov has successfully defended Black's position against no lesser players than Karpov and Kravtsik. For example 11 Qe4 Bb7 12 Bxb7 Rxb7 13 Rb1 Qe8 14 Bd2 Qh3! (the threat of 15...Ng4 forces White to weaken his centre) 15 f3 Nh5 16 Rf2 Qe8 17 Kg2 Re8 18 b3 Bd4 19 e3 Bxc3 20 Bxc3 Qxs3 and Black had regained the pawn with unclear play in Karpov-Topalov, 6th Amber rapid, Monte Carlo 1997.

Returning again to the Scenario One line, from the initial diagram, play might continue 8...Nxd4 9 Qxd4 d6 10 Qd3 (Diagram 15)

The white queen has prudently retreated out of the range of the bishop. She chooses a square where she keeps c4 defended and in doing so helps to fight for the b5-square.

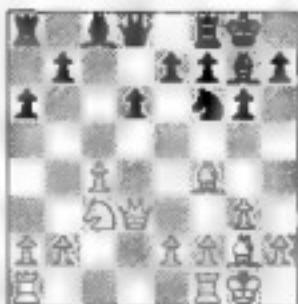
The question arises whether Black can gain counterplay with the plan of ...a7-a6, ...Rb8 and ...b7-b5, or will he just be creating a weak pawn on b5 and opening up lines for the white pieces?

In the illustrative game below it is Kasparov playing Black, therefore it isn't very surprising that Black's queenside push triumphs in the end.

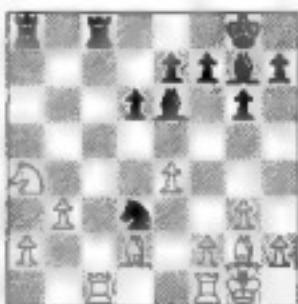
namic style! But a lesser player often finds that the isolated pawn he creates just proves sickly, and a target for the white pieces.

In fact Black often agrees to be rid of the weak b-pawn in return for activity. For example if he lets White play Bxb7 he will have the open b-file and a lead in development. Let's see Kasparov in action:

10...a6 11... (Diagram 15)



**Diagram 7B**  
Kruskal's algorithm: counterexample



**Diagram 17**  
A balanced position

Black can continue harassing the white queen with 11...Bf6. It may appear that Black is losing time with this move as the apparently strong reply 12 e4 attacks the bishop. However, after 12...Be6 White finds that he ~~can~~ no longer play Bxb7, as pushing the e-pawn has blocked in the bishop! Now 13 Rac1 Nd7! unleashes the dark-squared bishop and threatens 14...Ne5 with a double attack on c4, which would force White to make an unfavourable exchange of bishop for knight on e4. 14 b3 Ne5 15 Qd2 b5! (Black's thematic froging move) 16 exb5 axb5 17 Nxb5 Qa5 18 Nc3 Rfc8 19 Na4 Qxd2 20 Bxd2 Nd3 (Diagram 17).

White has a huge static advantage (connected passed pawns) but Black has intense dynamic pressure – the beautiful knight on d3 means that Black will win control of the c-file, whether or not White exchanges on c8, when ...Rc2 will be a threat. The static and dynamic advantages balance each other, making it a very unclear position in Smyslov-Kasparov, Belfort.

We see Kasparov in action again in the illustrative game.

Game 4

Hjartason  Kasparow  
Tilburg, 1989

1 c4 c5

The transpositional possibilities are enormous. This game actually began as a g3 Kings Indian: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 g3 c5 5 Bg2

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cad4 6 Nxd4 0-0 7 Ne3 Ne6 8 0-0

2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Ne3 Ne6 4 g3 g6

Leaving it to White to set the pace in the centre.

5 Bg2 Bg7 6 d4 exd4 7 Nxd4 0-0 8 0-0 Nxd4

Instead 8...Ng4? 9 e3 Nxd4 10 exd4 Nb6 intends ...Nf5 to pressure d4. Here White has a very good move, but it is difficult to see as normally we don't like to give up a bishop for a knight on the edge of the board: 11 Bxh6! Bxb6 12 c6! and thanks to his grip on the centre White stands better.

If Black had been allowed to play ...Nb6 then the knight could only have been ejected by the horribly weakening g3-g4. So it would in effect have been on an unavailable square in the centre.

**TIP:** Knights love centre squares, where they can't be dislodged by pawns.

A better approach for Black is 8...d6, offering a pawn. If White accepts with 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Bxc6 Rb8 then play is very similar to the 8...d6 line discussed under the sacrifices section above, but with the moves e2-e3 and ...Ng4 thrown in – a difference that surely favours Black. Instead White can avoid all this and keep a slight edge with 10 b3. Then Black can revert to the ...b7-b5 plan, e.g. 10...a6 11 Bb2 Nxd4 12 exd4 Rb8 etc. But it is fair to ask: what is the knight doing on g4?

9 Qxd4 d6 10 Qd3 a6 11 h3

We have already discussed 11 Bf4. Here is a trap Black has to avoid: 11 Be3 Ng4 12 Bd4 Ne5 13 Qd1. Then Black should continue with 13...Rb8, as taking on c4 would lose a piece to an exchange on g7 then Qd4+ and f2-f4 if necessary – 13...Nxc4? 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 Qd4+ Ne5 16 f4.

**TIP:** You can't hope to play good positional chess unless you see tactics.

Another possibility is 11 Rb8 when Black is ready for ...b7-b5. If White now continues quietly with 12 Rac1 Black gets to play his freeing move: 12...b5! 13 cxb5 axb5 14 Nxb5 Bf5 15 e4 Nxe4! 16 Bxe4 Bxe4 17 Qxe4 Rxb5 with a position that is difficult to assess because White has queenside passed pawns but Black has a nice centre. White can prevent this simplification with 12 c5?, offering the c-pawn. The idea is that after 12...dxe6 13 Qxd6 Rad8 14 Bf4 Ra8 15 Na4! there is the double threat of 16 Nxc6 and 16 Nb6 Ra7 17 Bb8. White regains his pawn with some initiative. If instead Black just ignores the move, with 12...Be6?, for example, then he is left with an isolated pawn after 13 cxd6 exd6. The best response is 12...Bf5!, Black again taking the pressure off b7 by making White play 13 e4, when 13...Be6 14 cxd6 Nd8? avoids being left with an isolated pawn. White could play 15 Bf4 Nxd6 16 Bxd6 Qxd6 17 Qxd6 exd6 but the price would be his lovely dark-squared bishop – it isn't worth it. Instead there is 15 Nd5 Nc6 16 Bf4 Bxd5 17 Qxd5 Bxb2 18 Rad1 Qc8! and Black returns the pawn.

avoiding the pin on the d-file and earning equal chances. Tal-Neverov, Moscow 1990.

Hjartarson's move in the game is also quite crafty. White waits for Black to play the natural 11...Rb8, when he can hit him with a familiar pawn sacrifice in the shape of 12 c5!, when 12...dxc5 13 Qxd8 Rxd8 14 Bf4 Ra8 15 Rfd1! leaves Black in dire trouble. He can't develop his bishop on c8 without b7 dropping, but if he doesn't develop the bishop then he loses control of the d-file. The extra pawn is meaningless as White can regain it at any point with Na4 and Rac1 if necessary.

This analysis and the following notes are based on Kasparov's analysis in Informator 48.

#### 11...Nd7!

Kasparov knows an immense amount of theory, but this hasn't dulled his tactical awareness or his ability to adjust his plans as necessary. Many players (even Grandmasters) ~~are~~ facing 11 h3 would think 'this is a slow, irrelevant move that doesn't do anything to stop my plan of queenside expansion - 11...Rb8 must be the right move'. Not, however, Kasparov. He is one of the greatest opening experts of all time because he combines knowledge with flexibility and originality to a perfect degree. The text clears the long diagonal for the king's bishop and rules out c4-c5.

#### 12 h3

Here's how Kasparov intended to neutralise White's queenside pressure after 12 Bd2: 12...Ne5 13 Qc4 Bd7!, offering the h-pawn, when 14 Qxb7 Rb8 15 Qxa6 Rxh2 gives Black huge play for the pawn, while if White refuses the offer then Black will play 14...Be6 and exchange off the light-squared bishops.



**TIP: Always be on the lookout (as Black) for ways to sacrifice the b7-pawn.**

#### 12...Rb8

But now it's right ~~is~~ return to the plan of preparing ...b7-b5.

#### 13 Be3 b5?? (Diagram 18)

Offering the exchange.

#### 14 exb5??

After 14 Ba7 b4 15 Bxb8? Nc5? ~~is~~ Qe3 Bxc3 Black has compensation for the exchange, but 15 Nd5! would have kept some advantage for White (Kasparov).

#### 14...axb5 15 Rac1

It ~~is~~ too late for 15 Ba7 in view of 15...Qa5! 16 Bxb8? (16 Bd4)

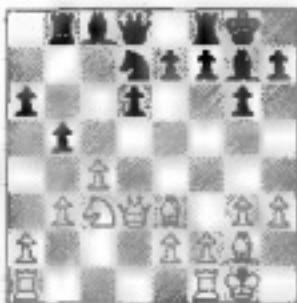
16...Bxc3 17 Rac1 b4 and White is in big trouble as his bishop is en-tombed on b8.

#### 15...b4 16 Na4 Qa5 17 Qd2

In this game, White's position gradually goes downhill. Here was the moment to bail out with the ~~zugzwang~~ 17 Qd5!, offering to trade queens.

## Starting Out: The English

This would prevent Black from building up an attack on the white king.



**Diagram 18**  
Black invites 14 Bg7



**Diagram 19**  
A useful kingside thrust

**17...Bb7**

The exchange of light-squared bishops is disagreeable for White, who must have been regretting weakening his king's position with 11 h3.

**18 Bxb7 Rxb7 19 Rfd1 Nf6 20 Rc4 h4! (Diagram 19) 21 Qc2 Rfb8 22 f3 Qe5 23 Bf2 Qe6 24 g4**

More solid was 24 Kg2.

**24...hxg4 25 hxg4 Rb5 26 Re1 Bh6 27 Re8+**

Now the rook abandons the defence of g4, after which a sacrifice from Kasparov becomes inevitable.

**27...Kg7 28 Rxb8 Rxb8 29 Nhg4! 30 Bd4+**

In the event of 30 fxg4 Qxg4+ 31 Kf1 Qh3+ 32 Kg1 Rb5 White's king is defenceless.

**30...Nf6 31 Kg2 Rb5 0-1**

## Scenario Two: White Offers the b2-pawn

**1 c4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Ne3 Ne6 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 Bg2 g6 7 0-0 Bg7 8 Nxd5 Qxd5 9 d3 0-0 10 Be3! (Diagram 20)**

An excellent offer of a pawn. Now after 10...Bxb2 11 Rb1 Bg7 12 Nd4 Qd6 (12...Qxa2 13 Nxc6 bxc6 14 Bxc6 sees White win the exchange) 13 Nxc6 bxc6 14 Qc2 Black is temporarily a pawn up but both doubled c-pawns are likely to drop.

A natural response would be 10...Qd6, getting the queen out of the way of the discovered attack, but if Black can safely develop a piece he should do it! Let's see what happened in the following world class game.

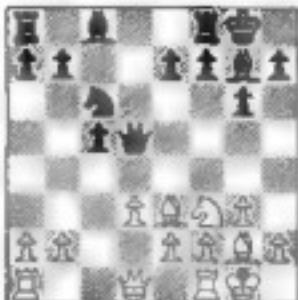


Diagram 20  
White offers the b-pawn

---

Game 5

□ Karpov ■ ■ ■

■ Amsterdam 1980

---

1 c4

Karpov was gunning for revenge in this game as Ribli had beaten him in their first game of this double-round tournament. Against a solid, defensive player like Ribli it seems Karpov had decided that he had to look for a modest positional advantage and keep plugging away.

1...c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Ne3 Ne6 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 Bg2 g6 7 0-0 Bg7 8 Nxd5 Qxd5 9 d3 0-0 10 Be3 Bd7! (Diagram 21)

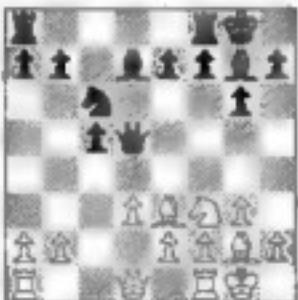


Diagram 21  
Black supports c6



Diagram 22  
Decisive bind

The key move. Black allows White a discovered attack on his queen but strengthens the knight on c6, thus avoiding doubled pawns.

## Starting Out: The English

Meanwhile, in reply to 11 Nd2, intending 12 Ne4, then h5 is a safe square for the queen, while 11 Ng5 Qe5, attacking b2, is good for Black.

**11 Nd4 Qd6 12 Nxc6 Bxc6 13 Bxc6 Qxc6 14 Rc1**

It seems that White has the advantage after all in view of 14...b6 15 b4 or 14...Bxb2 15 Rxc5, keeping the initiative (15...Qe6 16 Qa4 etc.). 14...Qe6!

So Black goes after the a2-pawn.

**15 Rxc5 Qxa2 16 Rb6!**

Karpov finds the only way to keep up the pressure. If Black managed to escape the bind then he could fight for the advantage due to his queenside pawn majority.

**16...b6 17 Qa1! Qxa1?**

Agreeing to enter a poor endgame. Here is a dynamic defence of Black's position: 17...Qe6? 18 Qa4 Rfc8 19 Rh4 Qd5 (the queen heads for h5 to terrorise the e2-pawn) 20 Ra1 Qh5 21 Qd1 Qd5 22 Raa4 b5! and Black gives up a pawn to activate his position and gain counterplay on the c-file. C.Hansen-Sutovsky, Esbjerg 2001 continued 23 Rxa7 Rxa7 24 Bxa7 Bh6! (threatening 25...Rc1+) 25 Be3! Bxe3 26 fxe3 Rc5 27 Qf1 Qe6 28 Qf3 Rc1+ 29 Kg2 Qc2 30 Rf4 Re1 31 Kf2 Qd1 32 Qa8+ Kg7 33 Rxh7+! (forcing a draw by repetition) 33...Kxf7 34 Qd5+ Kf8 35 Qd4+ Kf7 36 Qd5+ Kf6 37 Qd4+ e5 38 Qd6+ Kf7 39 Qd7+ Kf8 40 Qd8+ Kf7 41 Qd7+ Kf6 ½-½.

**18 Rxal Rfb8 19 Ra6!**

Fixing the queenside pawns. Black's problem is that the rook on a8 is passive. As Karpov remarks, if it were on the second rank Black would be okay.

**19...Kf8 20 Rb4 Be6 21 Rba4 b5?**

An instructive mistake. Black had to ensure the disappearance of all the queenside pawns with 21...Bxb2 22 Bxb6 Rb7 23 Bxa7 Rc8 when, in his book *Cheat at the Top*, Karpov says the endgame with five pawns versus four pawns would be very hard to win.

**TIP: Games are often won by creating an outside passed pawn. When you are a pawn down, try to exchange off all the pawns on the opposite side of the board to ~~the~~ kings.**

**22 Ra2! Rb7 ~~the~~ b3 Bb8 24 Bc5**

Black has been completely outplayed. Now Karpov intensifies the pressure by creating a passed pawn in the centre.

**24...Ke8 25 d4 Kd7 26 e4 e6 27 b4 Kc8 28 d5 exd5 29 exd5 Rd7 30 d6 (Diagram 22)**

Now Black's queen's rook and bishop are completely entombed.

**30...Rd8 31 Kg2 Kd7 32 Re3 Kc6 33 Re7 Rd7 34 Ra2!**

A decisive change of front. Black loses a piece after 34...Bxd6 35 Rxd7



Kxd7 36 Rd2.

34...a5 35 Rcz 1-0

A masterpiece won against one of the most difficult players to beat.  
Finally, we shall look at lines in which White delays or avoids Nf3.

## White Avoids Nf3

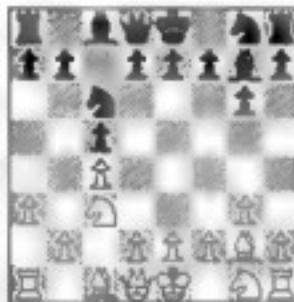
After 1 e4 e5 2 Ne3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 White has several interesting alternatives to 5 Nf3.

### Theoretical?

These lines offer a good way to avoid the complexities of the variations above.

### Immediate Queenside Action

5 a3!? (Diagram 23)



**Diagram 23**  
White prepares b2-b4

White delays the development of his kingside in favour of immediate action on the queenside. Black must now decide how he is going to counter the positional threat of 6 Rb1 and 7 b4, when White gains space and undermines the centre. The most solid method is probably 5...d6 6 Rb1 a5, putting a stop to b2-b4 for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, White will be pleased to have provoked the creation of a weakness on b5. You can see how in the illustrative game White manages to exploit this hole, in a similar position with 5...Nh6 rather than 5...d6.

It is also worth noting that this move order that 5...e5? can be answered strongly with the pawn sacrifice 6 b4!, when 6...cxb4 7 axb4 Nxb4 8 Be3 offers White excellent play. Black has a ragged centre

## Starting Out: The English

and his queenside can be attacked down the open files by the white rooks and queen, which would be ably abetted by the bishop on g2.

### In the Style of the Botvinnik System

With  $\mathbb{E} e4$  White chooses to deploy his pawns and pieces in the style of the Botvinnik System – see Chapter Seven. A possible line is 5...Nf6 6 Nge2 0-0 7 0-0 d6  $\mathbb{E}$  d3 when Black does best to prepare his own expansion on the queenside with 8...a6, intending ...Rb8 etc. Then White has to spend a move on  $\mathbb{E}$  h3 before he can put his bishop on e3 as 9 Be3 Ng4 is annoying. If instead 8...Ne8, then  $\mathbb{E}$  Be3 threatens to gain space with 10 d4, and 9...Nd4 10 Rb1 a5 11 Bxd4 cxd4 12 Nb5 looks pleasant for White, who has the b5-square again.

### Expansion in the Centre with Nge2 and d2-d4

The natural sequence is 5 e8 e6 6 Nge2 Ng6. Then 7 0-0 0-0  $\mathbb{E}$  d4 cxd4 9 Nxd4 d5! should equalise for Black. Instead White can try to keep some life in the position with 7 Nf4  $\mathbb{E}$  prevent the freeing ...d7-d5, but Black can then expand on the queenside with 7...a6 8 Rb1 b5!, when 9 exb6 axb6 10 Nxd6 0-0! offers good compensation for the pawn in Benko-like pressure on the queenside and a strong centre after ...d7-d5.

Game 5

$\mathbb{E}$  ■ ■ ■ W. Arencibia

Cienfuegos ■ ■ ■

1 c4 c5 2 Ne3 Nc6 3 g3 g6  $\mathbb{E}$  Bg2 Bg7 5 a3 Nh6

An ambitious move. Black prepares to bring his knight to f5 to gain control of the d4-square. At the same time he keeps the diagonal of the bishop on g7 open in an attempt to deter h2-b4. Nevertheless, all his hopes are reduced to ashes by the excellent play of Tony Miles. The solid approach was 5...Nf6 or 5...d6.

$\mathbb{E}$  Rb1 a5

He does well to stop 7 b4, but this leaves a hole on b5.

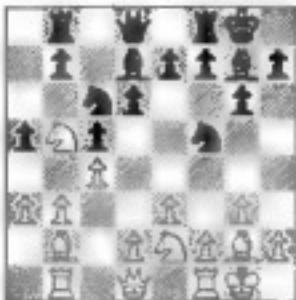
7 e3 Nf6  $\mathbb{E}$  Nge2 d6 9 b3

White prepares Bb2 and then the exchange of Black's important bishop on g7. Black's minor pieces look actively placed but they aren't supported by any pawn advances. Consequently no constructive plan is available.

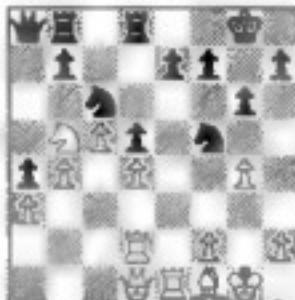
9...0-0 10 Bb2 Bd7 11 0-0 Rb8  $\mathbb{E}$  Nb8! (Diagram 24)

After this move even the ghost of a breakout with ...b7-b5 vanishes. The text also clears the way for the bishop exchange, when Black has no good way to stop a future d2-d4. This shows that Black's plan beginning with 5...Nh6 has been a failure.

12...Bxb2 13 Rxb2 Ne5 14 Nec3 Bxb5 15 Nxb5 a4



**Diagram 24**  
White stands better



**Diagram 25**  
White switches flanks

A bid for counterplay that shows Black is busted as White now plays the two pawn advances that this entire strategy was designed to prevent!

16 d4 Ne8 17 b4 cxd4 18 exd4 Qb8 19 Rd2 Rfd8 20 Re1 d5 21 c5!  
A decisive strengthening of the white pawns on the queenside. In reply to 21...Qxb5 White traps the queen with 22 Bf1.

21...Qa6 22 Bf1 Qa8 23 Ne7 Qa7 24 Nb5 Qa8 25 g4! (Diagram 25)  
Many players in this situation would be thinking about preparing a breakthrough ~~on~~ the queenside where the impressive white pawns can be supported by the pieces. But why allow the black queen to have a say in the outcome of the game? She is a powerful piece who is best left alone in her tomb on a8. Instead it makes sense for White to attack on the kingside.



**NOTE:** If there is a choice you should always start an attack as far away ~~as~~ possible from ~~the~~ main body of enemy pieces.

25...Ng7 26 Ne7 Qa7 27 Nb5 Qa8 28 Rds

The white pieces all head towards the enemy king.

28...Ne6 29 Rxe6 fxе6 30 Ne7 Qa7 31 Nae6 Re8 32 Rh3 Nd8 33 Qe1 b5 34 Qe5 Nxe6 35 Qxe6+ Kg7 36 Bd3 1-0

It's queen, rook and bishop against a king. Black resigned as there is no good defence against 37 Rxh7+! Kxh7 38 Qxg6+ and mate on h1.

## Chapter Two

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# Symmetrical English 2: Early Action in the Centre

■ Introduction

■ 1 c4 c5 ■ Nf6 3 d4 cxd4 ■ Nxd4 e5!?

■ 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 ■ cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6

■ Rubinstein Variation

■ White Avoids the Rubinstein

■ The Early ...Nd4



## Introduction

In this chapter we look at lines in which either White or Black breaks the symmetry at an early stage – move three or four – in order to begin immediate operations in the centre. The only exception is that after 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 we don't look at a black fiaschetto on g7. This is because after 4...g6 5 Ne3 Bg7 6 e4 we would end up in the Sicilian Maroczy Bind which, while playable for Black, is out of the range of this book. Instead we look at ways to retain an English flavour with 4...e6 or even 4...e5. The rest of the chapter is concerned with lines in which Black is the first to break the symmetry. The most important of these is Rubinstein's Variation, 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 Bg2 Ne7.

### 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e5!?

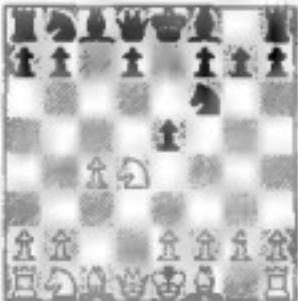


Diagram 1  
Black plays to win – or lose!

Black makes a bold pawn stab at the white knight to gain time for development, but it isn't without risk. It was used by the young Kasparov in the illustrative game – evidently that time he was more willing to take risks than after he became World Champion.

#### 5 Nb5

The knight has been dislodged from the centre but it spires a great square on d6. We have already mentioned the subject of holes in Chapter One, but it is such an important theme in a positional opening like the English that it is worth continuing the discussion here. A hole on a centre square is often a serious structural weakness and should be avoided unless there is clear compensation, such as material or an active development of your pieces. In this case White intends to exploit the hole with 6 Nd6+ Bxd6 7 Qxd6 when he has the two bishops and control of the dark squares.

## Starting Out: The English

After 5...d6 6 Bg5! Ne6 7 Bxf6 gxf6 8 N1c3 another hole has appeared in Black's position, this time on d5. A white knight can use such a square to dominate the board.

The worst type of holes are those that occur in front of one of the defender's own pawns, as the pawn gets in the way of bolstering the weak square with a rook or queen. On the other hand, a hole usually vanishes if this pawn can be advanced. With these considerations in mind Black should play:

5...d5! 6 exd5 Be5

Black couldn't recapture at d5 because after 6...Nxd5?? 7 Qxd5 Qxd5 8 Ne7+ he emerges a piece down. So he carries on with his plan of developing as rapidly as possible.

7 Nc3

The knight has been denied a moment of pleasure on d6, and this retreat denies the other knight its natural square. White might consider 7 d6, aiming for 8 Ne7 winning the rook in the corner, and if 7...Bb6 he can play still play Ne7 when appropriate, returning the extra pawn after Bxc7 etc. but acquiring the two bishops.

7...0-0 8 e3

Blunting the attack on f2. Instead 8 e4? Ng4 would be extremely unpleasant for White – how does he defend the f2-square? The assumption in all this is that White will castle kingside. Black is deploying his pieces in the expectation of being able to launch an attack against a king sitting on g1. But in fact White had available a more dynamic approach. For example 8 ... (preventing ...Ng4 and therefore threatening 9 e4) 8...e4 9 g4!! looks bizarre but White intends to play Bg2 combined with g4-g5, chasing away the knight to win the e4-pawn. Black can try 9...e3 to mess things up further, but it isn't convincing.

8...e4!

Black ensures that White will never be able to support the d5-pawn with a future e3-e4. Black also takes away the d3-square from the white bishop and, looking further ahead, both e4 and f3 from a white knight. A hard battle is ahead. Let's see how it might work out in practice.

---

Game 7

□ Mihailchishin ■ Kasparov

Fauz 1981

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 3 Nf3 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 Nb5 d5 6 cxd5 Bc5 7 N5c3 0-0 8 e3 e4 (Diagram 2)

We are sometimes stuck with misleading names for our openings. As you can see the game actually began with a Benoni move order in which White avoided 2 d5. For this reason the variation is sometimes called the Benoni-English, despite the fact that the pawn structure has absolutely no resemblance to the Benoni.

8 Be2 Qe7 10 Nd2

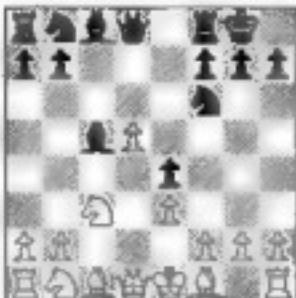


Diagram 2  
Black has more space

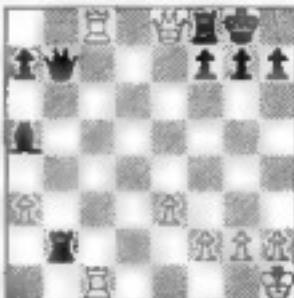


Diagram 3  
Who is winning?

A solid move. Instead 10 g4?? also had merit, with the aim of undermining the defence of e4 with g4-g5.

10...Rd8 11 a3

White returns the pawn but, on the other hand, he achieves full development and can try to exploit the slight weakness of the e4-pawn.

11...Nxd5 12 Nxd5 Rxd5 13 Qc2 Bf5 14 b4 Bb6 15 Bb2 Ne6 16 0-0 Qg5 17 Kh1 Rd8?

After 17...Re8 18 Nc4 White has a slight but annoying positional advantage, so Kasparov stakes everything on the complications that follow this sacrifice. White must accept or else the attack with ...Rh8 or ...Rg8 will become overwhelming.

18 Nxe4 Bxe4 19 Qxe4 Rd2 20 b5?

White gets excited about the prospect of creating a passed pawn on the seventh rank, but this plan fails to Kasparov's tactical resourcefulness. In fact White missed the chance to consolidate an advantage with the unexpected 20 Ba6!, when 20...Rxb2? 21 Bxb7 is bad and 20...bxa6 21 Qxc6 Rad8 22 Bd4 leaves Black active but still a pawn down.

20...Rxe2! 21 bxc6 Rxb2 22 cxb7 Rf8 23 Rac1 Ba8!

White may have missed the strength of this defence in his earlier calculations.

24 Rc8 Qb5 25 Rfc1 Qxb7 26 Qe8?? (Diagram 3)

Looks decisive, but...

26...Qxc8!

White's back rank proves weaker than Black's.

27 Qxc8 ■■■■

The point. Kasparov must have seen this quiet move at least seven

## Starting Out: The English

moves ago. No wonder he became World Champion!

28 h3

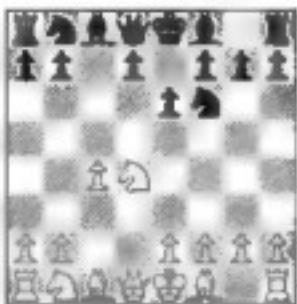
White has no way to avoid an endgame of queen versus two rooks in which the f2-pawn also drops.

28...h6 29 Qc4 Bxc1 30 Qxc1 Rxf2 31 Qc7 a6 32 Qa7 Rf6 33 a4 Rd8 34 a5 Rd1+ 35 Kh2 Rd2 36 Qb8+ Kh7 37 Qb4 Rff2 0-1

---

**1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 ♜ cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6**

---



**Diagram 4**  
A popular variation

Black prepares to develop his bishop and, if appropriate, advance ...d7-d5. This is a very popular variation for Black so we should look at it in detail, with the help of practical examples. After 5 Nc3 Black can prepare ...Qc7 with 5...a6 or counterattack after 5...Nc6 6 g3 with either 6...Bc6 or 6...Qb6, in both cases aiming to drive the white knight from the centre. Alternatively White could answer 5...Ne6 with 6 a3 to prevent a pin with ...Bb4.

## Theoretical?

Very much so. You will need to know some concrete lines as both White and Black.

**Game 8**

**Adlanto** ■ **Espinosa**  
Istanbul 2000

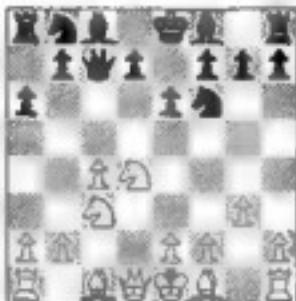
**1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 ♜ cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 Nc3 a6**

Black defends the b5-square so that he can play ...Qc7 without being bothered by Ndb5.

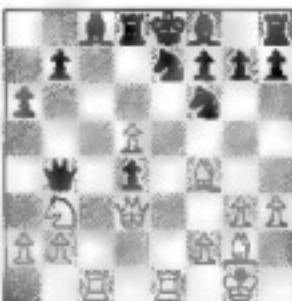
**6 g3 Qe7 (Diagram 5) 7 Bg2??**

White gambits the c-pawn in return for a lead in development. In-

stead the defensive 7 Qd3 let Black equalise easily in Kasparov-Kramnik, London Match 2000, after 7...Nc6 8 Nxc6 dxc6 9 Bg2 e5 10 0-0 Be6 11 Na4, when a draw was agreed. That insipid draw makes quite a contrast with the fire of Kasparov's attacking play versus Mihalchishin!



**Diagram 8**  
Black hits c4



**Diagram 9**  
Black is under pressure



**NOTE:** In Sicilian type positions with a small black centre consisting of pawns on d7 and e6 the best square for the black queen is almost always c7. Here she can exert influence both on the c-file and on the b8-h2 diagonal. That is why in the Sicilian Kan Black is often willing to commit the queen to c7 even before he develops any of his other pieces (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Bd3 Qc7).

7...Qxc4 8 Bf4 Nc6 9 Nb3

White gets the knight out of the way of a fork with ...e7-e6. Now there is no immediate danger to the black queen but her position is certainly uncomfortable as White has the idea of 10 Rc1 followed by 11 Nd5. Perhaps Black should have anticipated this with 9...Qb4.

9...d5?

The black d7-e6-f7 pawn centre is known from decades of master experience in the Sicilian Defence to be extremely resilient. It can survive all sorts of pressure. Therefore, having lost time by grabbing a pawn, the last thing Black should be doing is dismantling it. This move also presents White with a 'hook' on d5 which he can use to force open the centre.



**WARNING:** When you are behind in development, you should try to keep the position closed.

10 0-0 Qb4 11 e4!

After this White will have two big targets: the black queen and the black king!

**Starting Out: The English****11...d4**

Black tries to keep the d-file blocked since 11...dxe4 12 Re1 regains the pawn on e4 with a strong initiative.

**12 Nc5!!**

A sparkling move. White gives up a piece to open lines and disrupt Black's development, preventing the king escaping from the centre.

**12...exd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 Re1**

With the horrible threat of 15 d6. A long time ago I played against Karpov in a simultaneous display when he was world champion and I was a young amateur. I made a speculative sacrificial move, hoping to confuse him as I had heard that was the right thing to do in a simul. Karpov's reaction to this surprise was to pause and take a step backwards from the board. Then, after a short pause for thought, he found the complete answer to my foolhardy enterprise. In an exciting position such as this it can be worth taking a metaphorical 'step backwards' from the feverish calculation of variations and instead consider general principles. For example it is worth comparing the rook on a1 with the rook on h8, both of which are currently not involved in the struggle. The rook on h8 can never be brought into the game; meanwhile the white rook on a1 can be easily deployed to the open e-file. Thus in reality White has a large advantage in firepower despite the fact that, technically speaking, he is a piece down. Such a simple observation can tell you more about the value of a sacrifice than half an hour looking at variations.

**TIP:** If your opponent can't develop his pieces, there is no need to hurry – even if you have a piece.

**14...Bg4 15 Qd3 Rd8 16 h3 Bc8 17 Rac1 (Diagram 6)**

Black's king's rook and bishop remain entombed and there is the threat of 18 d6 Rxd6 19 Rxc8+. The hanging bishop on c8 means that Black is also ruined after 17...Nxd5 18 Bxd6.

**17...g5 18 Bdz Qd6 19 Qxd4**

Now there is no defence to 20 Bb4.

**19...Nfxd5 20 Qxh8 h6 21 Bxd5?**

White should only play such a move if it leads to a forced win.

**21...Qxd5**

Given even the slightest breathing space Black would play ...Bxh3, threatening mate on g2. But White has calculated he can do everything with check.

**22 Rxe7+! Kxe7 23 Bb4+ 1-0**

Game 9

□ Karpov ■ Topalov

Linares 1994

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 Nc3 Ne6 6 g3 Bc5

Before putting his bishop on e7 Black takes time out to dislodge the knight from the d4-square. Nevertheless, I think 6...Qb6 was the better way to challenge the knight - see the next game.

7 Nb3 Be7 8 Bg2 0-0 9 0-0 d6 (Diagram 7)

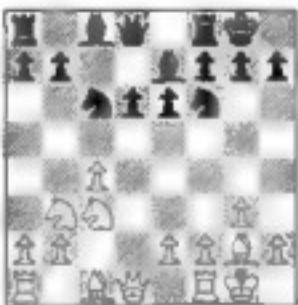


Diagram 7  
Black's small centre



Diagram 8  
Black's defences crumble

Black sets up the familiar small centre. An interesting alternative was 9...b6, planning ...Bb6 to develop the queen's bishop and attack e4.

10 Bf4!

This puts annoying pressure on d6 and seems to suggest that 9...b6 should have been preferred, not providing White with a target on d6.

10...Nh5

If Topalov thought that this would force the bishop to move away then a surprise awaited him.

11 e8!

An extremely instructive positional move. Black must now take on f4 – otherwise his last move was a waste of time.

11...Nxf4 12 exf4

Why did Karpov allow the removal of his dark-squared bishop for a knight, doubling his pawns in the process? It all comes down to the e6-pawn. If this pawn can somehow be made to advance to e5 White could then play Nd5 with a wonderful outpost in the centre. Such a knight would be worth more than either of Black's bishops. Now we ■ that after 12 exf4 White can attack e6 with Re1 and the advance f4-f5. White would even be willing to push his pawn as a sacrifice in some cases. If necessary, after Re1 and f4-f5 White could capture f5xe6 and, after ...fxe6, further add to the pressure on e6 with Bh3? etc. If White is allowed to carry out this plan it will be inevitable that Black will have to play ...e6-e5 at some point, when his light squares

**Starting Out: The English**

become weak and the dreaded Nd5 comes. Thus the change in the pawn structure has favoured White – the maligned doubled pawn is the key mover in White's strategy. The only way for Black to stop f4-f5 is with ...g7-g6, when the build-up g3-g4? to enforce this advance would loosen White's own kingside. Topalov trusts in ...g7-g6 in the game but Karpov has an alternative and deadly plan ready.

Finally, it is crucial in all this that Black has no counterplay. What is he supposed to do? He can hardly contemplate ...d6-d5, whilst the bishop on g2 is exerting so much pressure that it is difficult to arrange the ...b7-b5 break. In the game Topalov prepares ...b7-b5 in a laborious way, but it arrives ~~too~~ late to be more than a side-show.

**12...Bd7 13 Qd2 Qb8 14 Rfe1**

Now White is ready for 15 f5, when 15...exf5 16 Bxc8 would win a piece.

**14...g6**

The move Black had relied upon, but after...

**15 b4!**

White developed a decisive attack with remarkable speed.

**15...a6 16 h5 b5 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 Ne5!**

No doubt Black had foreseen this move but thought he could escape by using tactics.

**18...dxe5 19 Qxd7 Re8**

It seems that Black will survive because 20 Bxc6 Ra7 forces the queen back along the d-file and regains the piece. However, the reply shatters this defensive device.

**20 Rx e6!**

The purpose of this move is to combine the winning of the e6-square for the queen with the destruction of Black's kingside pawn structure.

**20...Ra7 21 Rxg6+! (Diagram 8) 21...fxg6**

**21...Kf8 22 Qh3 fxg6 23 Qh8+ Kf7 24 Bd5 mate.**

**22 Qe8+ Kg7 23 Bxc6**

Black's defensive tactic has failed and he is left with a wrecked kingside.

**23...Rd8 24 cxb6 ~~too~~ 25 Ne4 Bd4 26 bxa6 Qb6 27 Rd1 Qxa6 28 Rxd4!**

A fine concluding combination, during which Black loses virtually all his pieces.

**28...Rxd4 29 Qf5+ Kg8 30 Qxg6+ Kf8 31 Qe8+ Kg7 32 Qe5+ Kg8 33 Nf6+ Kf7 34 Be8+ Kf8 35 Qxc5+ Qd8 36 Qxa7 Qxf6**

It would have been the height of injustice if, after all White's brilliant play, Black had escaped with 36...Rd1+ 37 Kg2 Rg1+ 38 Kxg1?? Qd1+ 39 Kg2 Qh1+, forcing stalemate. But instead 38 Kh3! wins – 38...Rh1+ 39 Kg4 and the white king will escape.

37 Bh5 Rd2 38 h3 Rh2 39 Kg3 1-0

Game 10

□ Marin ■ Z Almasi

Bled 2002

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 g3

Here's a line that needs some care: 6 Ndb5 d5! (Black has to stop 7 Nd6+) 7 Bf4 e5 (and now the attack on c7 has to be blocked) 8 cxd5? exf4 9 dxe6 bxc6 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 11 Rd1+ Bd7 12 Nd6 Rh8 and White's sharp attack has led to ~~an~~ unclear endgame.

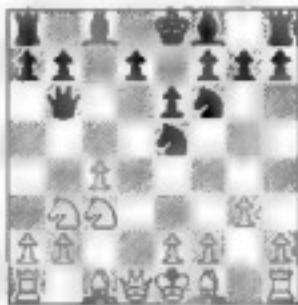
6...Qb6

Black has the same aim as in the previous game of forcing the knight on d4 to an inferior square, but this seems to be the superior way of doing it. Although the whole line is extremely complicated, the queen appears to be an asset on b6 rather than a target.

7 Nb3

7 Ndb5! is a sharp alternative.

7...Ne5?! (Diagram 9)



**Diagram 9**  
An awkward threat



**Diagram 10**  
Is c4-c5 dangerous?

This is Black's key move in this variation. It looks strange to move the knight again when he could be developing another piece, but it proves very annoying for White, who was hoping to develop in peace with Bg2 and 0-0 but now finds himself obliged to play some loosening moves in order to defend the c4-pawn. Of course, these so called 'loosening' moves may turn ~~him~~ to be strong as long as White survives the disruption with his position intact.

8 e4

Not the thematic move when you are planning Bg2, but how else can White prevent the capture on c4?

8...Bb4

## Starting Out: The English

And now White has to deal with the threat of 9...Nxe4. So against the 'accusation' that 7...Ne5 has lost time, it could be pointed out that this strong developing move comes with a threat.

**■ Qe2 ■■■**

Instead Black could give White doubled pawns with 9...Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 d6. However, White's dark-squared bishop would then be a strong piece. Therefore Black prefers ■■■ to keep up the pressure.

**10 ■■■**

White prepares to castle queenside.

**10...0-0 11 0-0-0 a5?**

Now it is a question of whether White's pressure on the centre outweighs Black's attacking chances against his king. Personally speaking, I would much prefer to be ■■■ the black side here and the result of the game confirms this opinion. If nothing else, it is easier to play attacking moves than find subtle positional moves, especially when your king is in the firing line.

**12 f4 Ne6 13 Be3 Qa6 14 Na4**

White blocks the advance of the rook's pawn and plans to embarrass the black queen, who is very short of squares thanks to the prospect of Qc2 followed by a discovered attack by the bishop with c4-c5. If now 14...Nxe4 the centre becomes open to White's advantage after 15 a3 Be5 16 Nxc5 Nxc5 17 Nxc5 dx5 18 Bxc5.

**14...e5!**

A thematic move that increases Black's grip on the central dark squares. As will be seen the d4-square becomes a serious hole in White's position. Furthermore, it allows Black to play ...Bd7 next without worrying about the response e4-e6. There is also the immediate threat of 15...Bg4.

**TIP:** If you can combine a logical move with a threat then it is normally ■■■ sign that it is ■■■ good idea.

**15 f5**

Perhaps White should bail out with 15 c5 Qxe2 17 Bxe2 with murky complications – even if he loses a pawn his piece pressure in the centre is very strong.

**TIP:** The best way to meet an attack on the king is by exchanging queens.

**16...Bd7**

At last the bishop is developed, and here there lurks a threat to the knight on a4.

**16 Qc2**

White continues his plan but it backfires due to Black's dynamic play.

**16...Ne7! (Diagram 10) 17 Nb6**

Or 17 c5 b5? 18 cxb6? Qb7! with the dual threats of 19...Bxa4 and

19...Rac8.

17...a4! 18 Nxa8 Rxa8

Not 18...axb3 19 Qxb3 and the bishop on b4 hangs. Black is happy to sacrifice the exchange to get a blistering attack.

19 Nd2 a3 20 b3 Rc8 21 Bg5 b5 22 Bxf6 gxf6 23 Kb1 Qb7 24 Bd3 Ne6!

Now White finds he can't adequately guard both the c4-square and the d4-square. Letting Black play 25...Nd4 would be terrible, but as played his king's defences crumble.

25 Nf3 Na5 26 Kd1 bxc4 27 bxc4 Ra4!

The point is 28 Qxa4 Bc3 mate.

28 Qc1 d5! 0-1

White resigned as 29 exd5 e4! ■■■ Bxe4 Rxe4 is gruesome.



■■■ J.Horvath ■■■

Reims 2002

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 Ne5 Ne6 ■■■ a3

White decides it is worth investing a tempo to rule out ...Bb4.

6...Nxd4 7 Qxd4 b6 8 e4

To become a good chess player you have to learn all the principles of positional play. Then, having learnt them all thoroughly, you have to train yourself to be extremely sceptical about their value during an individual game. Principles are at best approximations to the truth – sometimes they can be entirely wrong. This is just as well for if it were not the case it wouldn't be possible to win a game against a player who knew all the principles as he could draw on his knowledge to make one decent move after another. Here, for example, White plays an entirely natural sixth move, preventing ...Bb4, so what could be more consistent than gaining space with 8 e4? In fact there was a better plan, but it depends on a subtle appreciation of the position. It is no wonder it ■■■ discovered by Victor Korchnoi, one of the most creative chess minds of all time. He found 8 Qf4!, placing the queen on an active and safe square before playing e2-e4. Then 8...Bh7 9 e4 (only now!) 9...d6 10 Bd3 Be7 11 Qg3! 0-0 12 Bh7 Ne8 13 Bd2 Rc8 14 0-0 gave White a slight but pleasant space advantage in Korchnoi-Sax, Wijk aan Zee ■■■.

We often read in books that 'gaining space with e2-e4 is a good idea', but never that 'Qf4 and Qg3 is a good manoeuvre' – so learn to look at the position in front of you.

**WARNING:** Never blindly trust a half-remembered idea lurking in your brain.

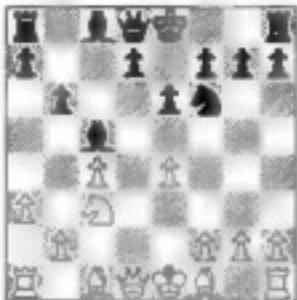
8...Bc8 9 Qd1 (Diagram 11)

Ajas, the queen has been barred from the kingside by her own pawn.

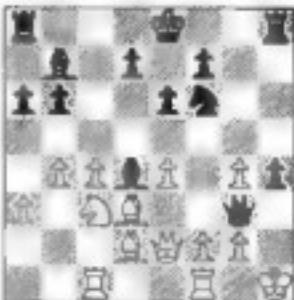


## Starting Out: The English

She is much less effective on d1.



**Diagram 11**  
The queen returns to base



**Diagram 12**  
Black's Brillancy

**9...Qc7!**

The familiar square for the queen in this type of centre - yes, this is a principle that was worth remembering!

**10 Bd3 Bb7 11 Qe2**

Black has active piece deployment but he is still suffering from a space disadvantage. Now he has to decide what to do about the threat of 12 e5, driving his knight back to g8.

**11...h5**

A good decision. Black prepares to answer 12 e5 with 12...Ng4 when it is a case of the hunter being hunted. And after...

**12 h3 h4!**

...the knight has the h5-square.

**13 b4?**

Another stereotyped decision. On his excellent Flank Openings website at Chesspublishing.com the winner of this game gives the correct line for White in 13 Nb5! Qb8 14 e5 Nh5 15 h4 Be7 16 0-0 a6 17 Ne3 and concludes that White might still have a slight edge.

**13...Qe6!**

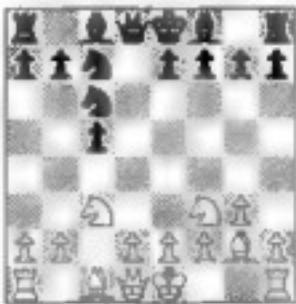
Evidently White had thought he was driving the bishop back to e7, as 13...Bd4? 14 Nb5 Qe5 15 f4 wins. If he had looked more closely at the tactical lines he would have seen that Black can play this strong preparatory move that wins time for 14...Bd4. It would have been unavailable after the immediate 13 Nb5 as 13...Qe5 doesn't attack a rook on a1 and so would just lose time after 14 f4 etc.

**TIP: Make sure you play your moves in the best order.**

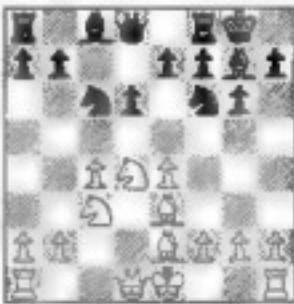
**14 Bd2 Bd4 15 Rc1 a5 16 0-0?**



## Starting Out: The English



**Diagram 13**  
The knight is happy on c7



**Diagram 14**  
Sicilian Maroczy Bind

## Theoretical?

It's a good idea to know something about the pawn sacrifice discussed below, but this isn't overly theoretical.

## Strategies

Don't be deceived into thinking that the black knight belongs on b6 in this type of centre, despite the fact that it retreats there in the Reversed Dragon and Pseudo-Grünfeld. If Black has a choice he will always prefer to have it on c7. Most importantly, compared to a knight on b6, on c7 the knight doesn't obstruct ...b7-b6, which consolidates the c5-pawn. And from c7 it can be manoeuvred to e6 where it hinders the c5-pawn and the d4-square, and may even go to d4 itself. The d4-square isn't technically an outpost square as the knight could be evicted with e2-e3, but White would certainly think carefully before playing this move as it leaves the d3-pawn backward and on an open file.

7 d3 e5 8 0-0 Be7 9 Nd2!

The best move. White uncovers the diagonal of his king's bishop with the immediate positional threat of taking on e6. Meanwhile the knight heads for the e4-square to put pressure on e5 and at the same time clears the way for f2-f4, striking once more at the black centre.

9...Bd7

Experience suggests that White has the significantly better chances if he gets to double the black pawns, after 9...0-0 10 Bxe6, for example. This scenario is discussed in the note to move 12, below.

Black has set up a Maroczy Bind with colours reversed. It is interesting to compare this position with one that arises in the Sicilian Accelerated Dragon after 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 c4 Bg7 6

**Bc3 Nf6 7 Nc3 0-0 8 Be2 d6 (Diagram 14)**

We can clearly see that Black's deployment in the Rubinstein has had to be much more modest due to the fact that he is a tempo down. In the Sicilian line White has played Be3 and kept the knight on d4; in the Rubinstein line Black has (for tactical reasons) had to play ...Nc7 and then develop more passively with ...Bd7 to protect his pawn structure. In the Sicilian line White would have to abandon his hold on d4 with the faintly absurd sequence 8 Nc2 Nd7 10 Bd2 to create a mirror image of the Rubinstein game. Nevertheless, the Rubinstein Variation sets up an impressive black pawn structure – the pawns on c6 and e5 create a pincer against the d4-square. It isn't in many openings that Black gets a space advantage right from the start. It is all very well to say that Black's pieces are inferior squares compared to the Sicilian Maroczy, but what can White actually do about it? White can't easily free himself with the natural d3-d4 break, and so has to arrange the f2-f4 pawn stab at e5, which involves a definite weakening of his own centre. In fact it is possible that an inexperienced player won't even realise he should be trying for f2-f4. He could well wander around planlessly with his pieces while Black builds up in the centre and finally hits him on the head.

**10 Ne4 0-0??**

The alternative is 10...f6, defending the e5-pawn, when Lautier-Leko, Batumi 1999 continued 11 f4 b6 (practically forced to drive back the knight, as 11...exf4 12 Bxf4 introduces the possibility of 13 Nd6+) 12 Ne3 Rcb7? (evacuating the rook from the danger diagonal) 13 e4 b4 14 Nb5 exf4 15 Ne4? Nxb5 16 axb5 Nd4 with complex play. Both pawn structures look loose.

**11 Bxe6 Bxc6 12 Nxe6 Be8 (Diagram 15)**

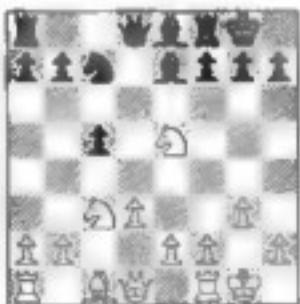


Diagram 15  
Black sacrifices a pawn

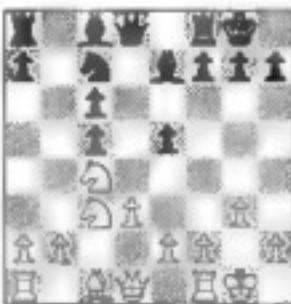


Diagram 16  
A position Black should avoid

Back at move nine Black wasn't interested in accepting doubled pawns on the queenside in return for White's light-squared bishop.

## Starting Out: The English

but here he is willing to give up the e5-pawn to gain the bishop! How can this change of mind be explained? It is a question of open lines and the control of key squares. At move nine, consider the plausible continuation 9...0-0  $\blacksquare$  Bxc6 bxc6 11 Ne4 (Diagram 16) (11 Qa4 might also be good) with the following position:

Here the white knight has a beautiful outpost on e4, from where it can never be dislodged by a pawn. Nor can Black play ...Bc6 to seize the diagonal – there is a black pawn blocking this square. Thus the semi-blocked nature of the position makes it difficult for Black to exploit the bishop pair or strike a serious blow against the white king. Now look again at the diagram (in the Kasparov game) after 12...Be8. The white knight is floating on e5 and will have to retreat once attacked by ...Bf6. Here there is no sanctuary on c4, as it can be dislodged by ...b7-b5. So the knight is much less happy here. Secondly, the black bishop has retreated to e8, but once the knight is ejected from e5 it can go to e6 when it enjoys a strong diagonal (there is no pawn blocking this square). And thirdly, after 13...Bf6 next move and the retreat of the white knight, the dark-squared bishop can go to d4 (there is no black pawn on e6 hindering its activity). Finally a black rook can exploit the open e-file by attacking e2 with ...Rfe8. This latent threat is likely to persuade White to weaken his pawns with c2-c3, as occurs in the game. Thus we see that the balance of piece activity is much more favourable to Black after the pawn sacrifice than in the doubled pawn line.

Nevertheless, to paraphrase George Orwell: it should be remembered that all pawns are equal but some pawns are more equal than others. Black is making a serious sacrifice by giving up his important e-pawn.

### Game 12

Pilket  $\blacksquare$  Kasparov

KasparovChess  $\blacksquare$  Internet 2000

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 d5 4 exd5 Nxd5 5 g3 Ne6 6 Bg2 Ne7 7 d3 e5 8 0-0 Be7 9 Nd2 Bd7 10 Ne4 0-0? 11 Bxe6 Bxe6 12 Nxe5 Be8 13 Qb3 Bf6 14 Ng4 Bd4

Black hopes to prove the knight is badly placed on g4, but after f2-f3 and Nf2 it turns out to be well placed, defending the d3-pawn. Perhaps 14...Bc6 15 Na5+ Qxf5 should have been preferred.

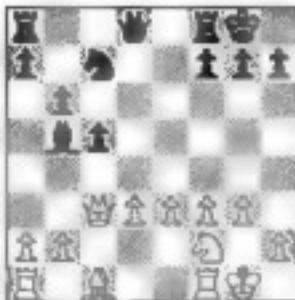
15 e3!

White wisely erects barriers in the centre. A typical Kasparov king-side attack follows after 15 Qxb7 f5! etc.

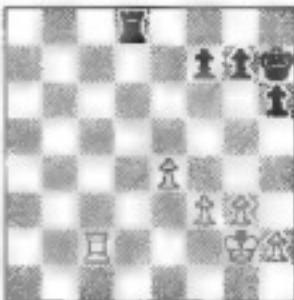
16...Bxc3 16 Qxc3 b6 17 f3! Bb5  $\blacksquare$  Nf2 (Diagram 17) 18...Qd7 19 e4

It isn't very pleasant to have to give away the d4-square, but White needed to develop his queen's bishop and Black could anyway have practically forced this move with ...Rfe8, intending ...Nd5 etc.

19...Ne6 20 Be3 a5 21 Rad1 Rad8 22 Rd2 Qc6



**Diagram 17**  
The knight returns



**Diagram 18**  
A book draw

Black has a lot of piece play but there is no way to destroy White's central fortress. A state of dynamic equilibrium has arisen which is only broken because Black seems to lose patience.

**23 Re1 Qb7 24 a3 Nd4 25 Kg2 Re8?**

This looks like a significant error as it gives White the chance to open lines in a favourable way with the b2-b4 break. Instead 25...a4 fixes the queenside and threatens 26...Nb3. If then 27 Bxd4 Rxd4 28 h4 axb3 29 Qxb3 Ra4? Black seems to be okay, his queenside pawns being much more secure than in the game.

**26 Rb1!**

Avoiding the trick 26 Bxd4? cxd4 when the rook on c1 will drop. But now the capture on d4 really is threatened, which means that Black has no time to play 26...a4 to lessen the effect of b2-b4.

**26...Rfd8 27 Bxd4! Rxd4 28 b4!**

This thematic advance ruins Black's queenside.

28...axb4 29 axb4 Qd7 30 bxc5 bxc5 31 Rbb1 h6 32 Ra2 Kh7 33 Ra5 Rd8 34 Qxc5 Bxd3 35 Rxd3?



**TIP:** It is well known that when there are pawns on only one side of the board the knight's ability to control squares of both colour makes it more effective than a bishop, whose long range powers become irrelevant. Therefore White should have kept minor pieces on the board and played for the attack (with 35 Ra7!, for example).

**35...Rxd3 36 Nxd3 Qxd3 37 Ra1 Qb8 38 Qc2 Qxc2+ 39 Rxc2 (Diagram 18)**

The endgame is now a book draw, although not without some discomfort for the defender. Kasparov puts his pawns on the correct squares to make it difficult for White to create a passed pawn.

**39...h5! 40 f4 g6 41 e5 Rd3?**

## Starting Out: The English

The rook should have stayed on its second rank with 41...Rd7!, for after White's rook infiltrates Black's defence crumbles.

42 Kh3 Re3 43 Kh4 Kg7 44 Kg5 Re1 45 Re7 Re2 46 Re7 Ra2 47 f5 gxf5 48 e6 h4 49 Rxrf7+ Kg8 50 Kf6 1-0

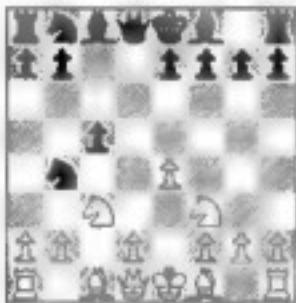
The passed pawn is unstoppable. To be fair to Kasparov it should be remembered that this was a rapidplay game (one hour each). I think he would have held the draw at a classical time control.

## Avoids the Rubinstein Variation

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 d5 4 exd5 Nxd5 5 e4

Another possibility is 5 d4, when 5...Nxc3 6 bxc3 would transpose to the Grünfeld. The attempt to keep the game in English territory with 5...cxd4 6 Qxd4 Nxc3 7 Qxe3 seems to me to be a little dangerous for Black, who is behind in development and will therefore suffer when White is first to exploit the open lines in the centre.

Black could play very sharply (after 5 e4) with 5...Nb4!? (Diagram 19)



**Diagram 19**  
The weirdest line in the English

The beginning of a somewhat bizarre manoeuvre. White cannot play 6 d4? as 6...cxd4? Nxd4? Qxd4! falls for a knight fork on c2. This is already the third time Black has moved the knight in the first five moves, and if 6 Be4 he intends to move it another three times: 6...Nd3+ 7 Ke2 Nf4+ 8 Kf1 Ne6. The knight has achieved a lot, preventing White from castling and arriving to a nice centre square from where the key d4-point can be further monitored. Still, you can't expect to move a knight six times in eight moves without incurring some danger and, here, the sharp variation B b4!! axb4 10 Nd5??, when White has cleared the way for d2-d4, gives White a significant initiative for the pawn.

White has another way of causing Black problems after 5...Nb4,

namely 6  $\text{Bb}5+$   $\text{Nc}6$  7  $\text{d}4!$  (anyway?) 7... $\text{cx}d4$  8  $a3!$   $\text{dx}c3$  9  $\text{Qxd}8+$   $\text{Kxd}8$  10  $\text{ax}b4$   $\text{cx}b2$  11  $\text{Bsh}2$   $\text{Ed}7$  12  $\text{Bxc}6$   $\text{Bx}c6$ . After this mass of exchanges White is still a pawn down, but with 13  $\text{Ne}5!$   $\text{Kc}8$  14  $\text{Nxc}6$   $\text{bx}c6$  15  $\text{Ke}2$ , clearing the way for his king's rook to enter the fray, his lead in development will ensure he regains one of the pawns while maintaining the pressure – after all, it isn't easy for Black to bring his king's rook into the game.

#### Game 13

□ Krasenkow ■ Protopopov

Szeged 1999

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxe8 6 dx $c$ 3?

We would be in the Grünfeld after 6  $\text{bx}c3$ . With the text White secures a slight edge in the endgame.

6...Qxd1+ 7 Kxd1 Ne8 8 Kc2 e6 9 Bf4 ~~f8?~~

Black is provoked into setting up a rigid structure of pawns in the centre that leaves his light squares looking sickly. He should play 9...Be7 here, though White then has a very pleasant edge.

10 Nd2 e5 11 Be3 Be6 12 Be4!

White trades off Black's active bishop and leaves him with the inferior one. The bishop exchange also means that the important centre squares e4 and d5 are left without their natural guardian.

12...Kf7?

Black had to fight for the e4-square with 12...Bac4 13 Nxc4 b6! etc.

13 a4! (Diagram 20)

This is a key positional move, after which Black is condemned to a miserable defence. White rules out ...b7-b5 and so secures the e4-square as a wonderful outpost for his knight.

13...Be7 14 Bxe6+ Kxe6 15 Nc4 b6 16 Rhd1 Rhd8 17 Rxd8 Rxd8 18 g4!

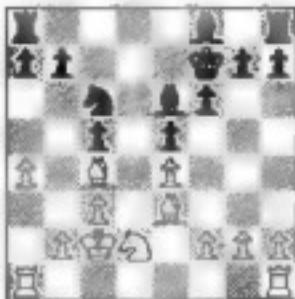


Diagram 20  
White rules the light squares

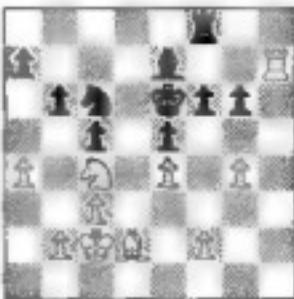


Diagram 21  
White prepares Nc3

## Starting Out: The English

White's winning plan is to cause a disturbance on the kingside which will tie down the black king and rook. Then at the moment when the black defenders are at their most distracted he will suddenly open a second front and begin to infiltrate with his king along the weak light squares in the centre.

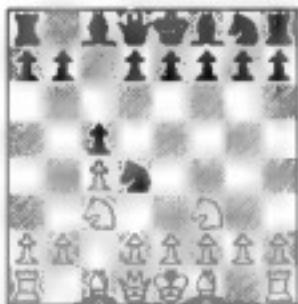
18...g6 19 Rg1 Rh8 20 ~~Kh7~~ 21 h4 Ke6 22 h5 Rd8+ 23 Kc2 Rg8 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 Rh1 Nd8 26 Nc3 Ne6 27 Rh7 Re8 28 Ne4 Rf8 29 Bd2 (Diagram 21) 29...f5 30 Rb6 fxg4 31 Rxg6+ Rf6 32 Rxh6+ Kxf6 33 Kd8 Kg6 34 Ne3!

The knight suddenly retreats and wins the game. If Black defends the g4-pawn with 34...Kh5 then he is in effect a king down in the end-game; the black monarch ~~will~~ only watch the decisive invasion on the light squares after 35 Kc4 etc.

34...Bg5 35 Nxg4 Bxd2 36 Kxd2 Kg6 37 f3 Kf4 38 Ke2 a6 39 Nb5 40 Nd5+ Kg5 41 Ne7 bxa4 42 Ne6+ 1-0

## The Early ...Nd4

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nd4 (Diagram 22)



**Diagram 22**  
Black seizes the centre

A radical way to stop 4 d4. Black breaks an elementary rule by moving a piece twice in the opening, but he would claim that after 4 e3 (the obvious response) 4...Nxf3+ 5 Qxf3 the exchange of a pair of minor pieces has helped him in a general way - he has less space so the fewer pieces he has to accommodate within his pawn structure the better. Additionally, 4 e3 isn't exactly tearing at Black's throat, ~~so~~ the loss of time isn't that important. In the interesting illustrative game White managed to find a way to justify his queen being ~~on~~ f3, but since then improvements have been found for Black. Therefore, thus far there is ~~no~~ refutation of 3...Nd4.

**Game 14**

□ Krasenkow ■ Maciejka

Plock 2006

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Ne6 3 Nc3 Nd4 4 e3 Nxf3+ 5 Qxf3 g6 6 b3

The logical development for the queen's bishop.

6...Bg7 7 Bb2 d6 8 g4?? (Diagram 23)



**Diagram 23**  
Active prophylaxis



**Diagram 24**  
White changes gear

The Polish GM comes ~~out~~ with an interesting plan of restraint.

8...Rb8?

It is no surprise that Black underestimated the danger from the little pawn on g4. Instead he should have got the knight out before the white pawn gets to g5: 8...Nh6! 9 g5 Nd7 10 h4 Ne5 is unclear.

9 Bg2 Bd7 10 Qe2 a6 11 g5!

In the ancient game of Arabic chess there was an opening variation called *gerchi gazighi*, or the goat peg: According to a Turkish manuscript of 1501, 'It was so called because he who plays it wins with his pawns. They are like a peg in his opponent's clothes, and his opponent is like a man with his hands bound' (quoted from *Learn from the Grandmasters* by Raymond Keene). Here the g6-pawn is a peg in Maciejka's clothes. It prevents the knight on g8 from developing to either f6 or h6. The alternative way out is via e7, but this will involve a serious weakening of his dark squares in the centre and kingside with either ...e7-e6 or ...e7-e5 (not something Black wants to do with the white bishop lurking ~~in~~ b2 and the knight on c3 ready to spring to e4 once the pin on b2 is broken).

11...h5 12 d3 Qa5 13 Rc1

Black's queenside play looks impulsive, but just how is he going to bring the knight on g8 into the game?

13...h6! 14 h4 Rh7

## Starting Out: The English

The point of this odd looking move is to defend the bishop and so threaten 15...b4 16 Nd5 Qxa2.

**■■■ Ba1 hxg5 16 hxg5 Rxh1+ 17 Bxh1 b4 18 Ne4 Qa8 19 Qd2 Bxa1 20 Rxa1 Re8**

Black has been striving hard with considerable bluster on the queen-side, but this last move is rather forlorn. He has run out of ideas and is still stuck with the wretched knight on g8. Krasenkow decides it is time to start his own attack, putting his opponent out of his misery.

**21 d4! (Diagram 24) 21...Bc6 22 dxc5 Bxe4 23 Bxe4 Rxe5 24 f4 a5 25 Qd4 Kf8 26 Kf2 a4 27 Kf3 Ra6 28 Rh1!**

White's position is now so strong that he can afford to jettison the queenside. The Goat Peg has done its deed!

**28...axb3 29 Rh7 Qc1 30 Qb6**

This threatens both the rook and mate on the back rank. Once Black runs out of checks the battle will be over.

**30...Qf1+ 31 Kg3 Qg1+ 32 Kh3 Qf1+ 33 Bg2 Ra8**

The last try, hoping for 34 Bxf1? bxg2 when Black will have a new queen. White replies by driving the rook away from a8.

**34 Qb7! 1-0**

## Chapter Three

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# Symmetrical English 3: The Hedgehog

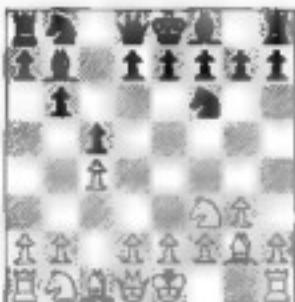
- Introduction
- Black's Vulnerable d6-pawn
- The Modern Method for White: 7 Re1
- The Double Fianchetto



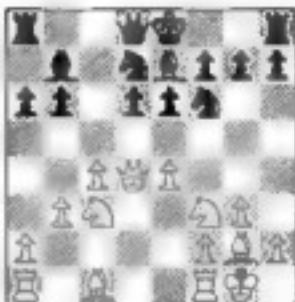
## Starting Out: The English

# Introduction

The Hedgehog is a famous system of defence that is defined by two interconnected plans. First (Diagram 1), Black plays ...c7-c5 and then ...b7-b6 followed by ...Bb7 to contest the control of the long diagonal of the bishop on g2.



**Diagram 1**  
Black opposes bishops



**Diagram 2**  
A typical Hedgehog scenario

Secondly (Diagram 2), Black sets up a mini centre with pawns on e6 and d6, and also plays ...a7-a6, and is then ready to break if possible with ...b6-b5 or ...d6-d5. If White plays f2-f4, then ...e6-e5 is often the best response.

## Theoretical?



Not particularly. But may I have a skull and cross bones, Mr. Printer!  
**WARNING:** The difficulty of this variation doesn't depend so much on the need to know opening theory as on the extreme complexity of the manoeuvring battle that arises. You will need a lot of patience to play this well.

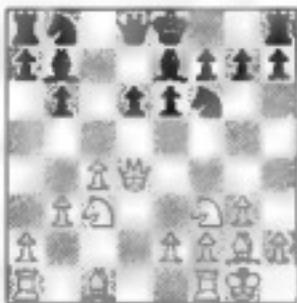
## Strategies

The Hedgehog isn't unique to the English – it is commonly reached via Sicilian lines such as the Kan. Therefore it is no surprise that the correct strategy for both players has a Sicilian flavour to it. Thus the quiet situation in the centre, where he has a marked space advantage and the greater mobility, suggests that White should go for an all-out kingside attack. This is fine as long as at the same time he manages to keep the black centre restrained and also to prevent a ...b6-b5 break, which is by no means easy. After all, that is a lot of things for the poor human brain to think about during a game – the queenside,

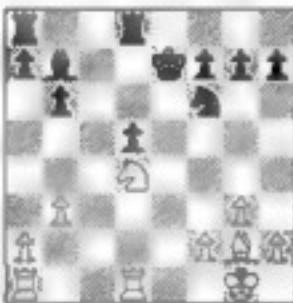
centre and king-side – so it is no wonder that the best players in the world occasionally lose control when White in these positions. Indeed GM Suba, a great fan of the Hedgehog for Black, has gone as far to say that, since White has achieved his ‘ideal’ set-up right from the opening (space and mobility), his position can only go downhill, as there is no way to improve on the ideal! Meanwhile Black can keep striving for improvement with a pawn break. Normally the Hedgehog witnesses long, drawn out manoeuvring, with neither player daring to commit himself to a definite plan.

## Black's Vulnerable d6-pawn

Consider the position after the typical build-up 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 b6 4 Bg2 Bb7 5 0-0 e6 6 Nc3 Be7 7 d4 cxd4 8 Qxd4 d5 9 b3 (Diagram 3)



**Diagram 3**  
The d6-pawn is a target



**Diagram 4**  
White's knight is ideal

Black's 1...c5 and 5...e6 have both been very useful. The first loosened White's grip on the centre by exchanging itself for the proud white d4-pawn, while the second protected the d5-square and introduced the latent dynamic threat of a ...d6-d5 break. However, these moves have deprived the pawn on d6 of its two natural supporters.

Indeed, the pawn is rather uncomfortable as it stands on an open file, which means it can be attacked frontally by Rd1, as well as by the queen on d4. To make matters worse it can also be attacked by a knight (Nb5) or a bishop (Bb3). In order to lessen the potential pressure, at some point soon Black needs to play both ...a7-a6, to prevent Nb5, and ...Nbd7 so that, if necessary, an attack with Bb3 can be blocked by ...Ne5. But which move should he play first?

In fact Black has to be very careful with his move order. Experience shows that he should play 9...Nbd7? first rather than 9...a6 so that he can answer 10 Bb3 with 10...Nc6, obstructing the bishop. In Ivan-

## Starting Out: The English

chuk-Nisipeanu, Las Vegas 1993, after 9...Nbd7 White tried to exploit the delay of ...a7-a6 with 10 Nb4, when there followed 10...Ne6 11 Rd1 d5 12 cxd5 exd5. The pressure on d6 has persuaded Black to acquiesce and accept an isolated pawn, but he remains very solidly entrenched in the centre. Here 13 Bb2 would be the way to keep a slight edge for White. Instead Ivanchuk tried 13 Ba3?! and there followed 13...Qd7? 14 Nc3 Ne6 (a double attack on the queen and bishop!) 15 Ne5 Nxd4 16 Nxd7 Kxd7 17 Bxe7 Nxe2+! (a desperado move – the knight is going to be lost anyway, so why not sell it as dearly as possible?) 18 Nxe2 Kxe7 19 Nd4 Rhd8 (**Diagram 4**)

White's compensation for the pawn wasn't entirely convincing, though a draw was agreed a couple of moves later. You will see in the diagram that White has his knight on an ideal square. Knights hate being attacked by pawns and operate at short range, so it stands to reason that they are best placed on the square in front of an isolated enemy pawn in the centre.

In the first illustrative game Black played the imprecise 9...a6 but wasn't punished. In fact this should have been a glorious win for the Hedgehog against a world champion. If nothing else, it is proof of Capablanca's adage that the good player is always lucky!

### Game 15

**□ Karpov ■ Csom**

**■■ Layerberg 1977**

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 b6 4 Bg2 Bb7 5 0-0 e6 6 Nc3 Be7 7 d4 cxd4 8 Qxd4 d6 9 h3 a6?!

A significant inaccuracy that Karpov pounces on straightaway.

10 Ba3!

Exactly. White attacks the d6-pawn before Black has any chance to shield it with ...Nc5.

10...0-0 11 Rfd1 Ne8

A much less efficient way of defending d6 than by ...Nr5, though it provoked an unexpected reaction.

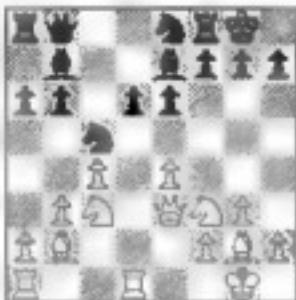
12 Bb2?

Why did Karpov lose his nerve? It isn't difficult to see that the consistent 12 Ne4! is very strong. Then after 12...d5 13 Bxe7 Qxe7 14 cxd5 Bxd5 16 Nc3 both the bishop on d5 and the b6-pawn are hanging, while after 12...Bxe4 13 Qxe4 White has exchanged his knight for the black bishop – a very good deal. An attempt to break out tactically fails: 13...d5? 14 Bxe7 Qxe7? 15 cxd5 Nf6 16 d6! and White is winning.

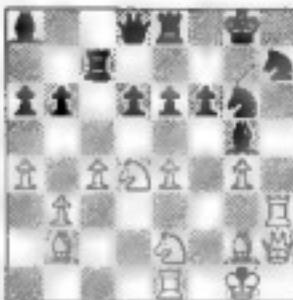
12...Nd7 13 e4 Ne5 14 Qe3 Qb8! (**Diagram 5**)

Black removes his queen from the d-file before White can exploit the pin by playing 15 e5, which would have broken the hedgehog set-up. The text is more accurate than 14...Qc7 as in the future the queen on b8 might support a ...b6-b5 advance, once the bishop on b7 is moved out of the way. Furthermore, a queen on c7 sometimes gets hit by a

sudden Nd5 or Nb5. And finally, Caom is planning to activate his rook on the second rank, and doesn't want the queen in the way.



**Diagram 5**  
A good outpost for the queen



**Diagram 6**  
Excellent defence

### 15 Nd4 Nf6 16 h3

Karpov feels that he has restrained Black sufficiently and now begins the prescribed kingside pawn advance. Of course, it is okay to move the pawns in front of your king if you can keep your opponent's pieces bottled up, but if you lose control it can lead to disaster. As this game shows, even a great player like Karpov can't always keep control!

#### 16...Rc8

Black shows he is unruffled by White's kingside build-up by moving his rook way.

#### 17 g4 h6!

Caom has devised a deep method of defence that requires he clear the h7-square for his knight.

#### 18 f4 Nh7 19 Qf2 Ra7 20 Rd2 Ba8 21 Re1 Bf8

This would be a mistake were it not for the fine idea Caom has in mind.

#### 22 h4

It looks as if White is going to achieve 23 g5 with gain of time, when his attack is making sure progress.

#### 22...g5!!

Brilliant positional play. There is a rule that says you shouldn't move pawns when facing a headlong attack by enemy pawns. This is because such moves create 'hooks' on which the attack can be latched. However, that rule mainly applies to situations in which players have castled on opposite wings. Here the white king also becomes a target as the pawn structure dissolves. Caom's move destroys the flexibility of White's pawns and seriously undermines his control of the impor-

**Starting Out: The English**

tant dark square on e5.

**23 hxg5 hxg5 24 fxg5**

White wants to open lines for the attack, but in fact it is the black pieces that will benefit most. White had to keep the position closed with 24 f5!, even though this meant the surrender of the e5 square.

**24...Bxg5 25 Rdd1**

Now Black is in command of an excellent array of dark squares, namely e5, f5 and g5. He begins by rerouting his queen's knight to e5.

**25...Nd7! 26 Rd3 Ne5 27 Rh3 Re8!**

A mysterious rook move, but the idea is simple once you have seen it. Black defends e6 so that he can clear the second rank with ...f7-f6 without allowing Nxe6.

**28 Nee2 Re7!**

The threat of 29...b5 forces White to weaken himself even more. If instead 28...b5? immediately the rook would be hanging on a7 after White took twice on b5.

**29 a4 Qd8 30 Qg3 Ng6 31 Qh2 f6! (Diagram 6)**

The complete answer to the attack down the h file. Black's deep defensive play has outwitted an opponent who is himself possibly the greatest strategist of all time. White is reduced to thrashing around, looking for a tactical blow whilst his centre is collapsing.

**32 Rd1 Rg7 33 Nf3 Bxe4**

Black is happy that the centre is opening as his own pieces are much better co-ordinated than White's, most of which are stuck offside after the unsuccessful kingside attack.

**34 Rxd6 Qc7 35 Ba3 Be3+ ■■■ Kf1 Bc5 37 Bxc3 Qxc5 38 Rd4 Rxff 39 Rxf3 Ne5**

The g4-pawn now drops, leaving White's king terribly vulnerable. Karpov now makes a desperate attempt to confuse his opponent in a tactical melee.

**40 Rh3 Nxg4 41 Qd6 Qf5+ 42 Rf3 Qb1+ 43 Rd1 Qe4 44 Rg3 Ne3+ 45 Kg1 Nxg2 46 Rxg7+ Kxg7 47 Ng3 Qa8 48 Qc7+ Kh8 49 Rd7 Nf8??**

Right at the last moment Caos collapses. Surely his brilliant positional play deserved a better fate? Any great player is a tremendous fighter and here Karpov is rewarded for his fierce resistance. Instead 49...Ng5! would leave Black a piece up with very little still to do, for example 50 Nb5 (with the threat 51 Rh7+! Nxb7 52 Qg7 mate) 50...Rg8 51 Nxf6 Nf4! and White can't mate with 52 Rh7+ as after 52...Nxb7 he is in check. Therefore his own king will be mated in a couple of moves.

**50 Nf8! 1-0**

The threat is 51 Rh7+ Nxb7 52 Qg7 mate, while 50...exf5 51 Qh2+ Kg8 52 Qg3+ Kh8 53 Qg7 and 50...Nxd7 51 Qh2+ Kg8 52 Qg3+ Kf7 53

$\text{Qg7}$  are both mate. These variations wouldn't have worked after  $49\ldots \text{Ng5}$  as  $52 \text{Qg3+}$  isn't check. According to *Anatoly Karpov's Games as World Champion 1975-77* 'Caen resigned after sitting for 15 minutes at the board with a very red face'.

This game reminds us that we always have to be looking out for tactics. Here is another example of a 'bolt from the blue' in a hedgehog type centre:

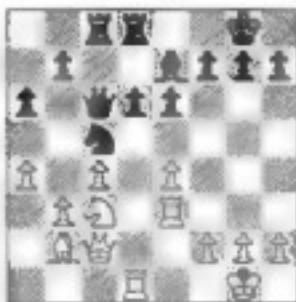


Diagram 7  
A solid Hedgehog?

This position was reached in Tkachiev-Watson, London 1993. Black has a solid hedgehog and apparently well placed pieces. The only annoying thing for him is that he can't break out with either ...b7-b5 or ...d6-d5. White has these squares nicely covered. Still, there doesn't seem to be any danger, and Black played the natural  $19\ldots \text{Bf6}$ , putting his bishop the long diagonal. Alas, this very natural move turned out to be a disaster after  $20 \text{Nd5!} \text{ exd5}$ . There is no good way to decline the offer as  $20\ldots \text{Bab2} 21 \text{Ne7+}$  wins the queen. There followed  $21 \text{exd5} \text{ Qd7} 22 \text{Bxf6} \text{ gxf6} 23 \text{Rg3+} \text{ Kh8} (23\ldots \text{Kf8} 24 \text{Qxh7#}) \text{ Kxh7} 25 \text{Rd4} 1-0$ . Black resigned as there is no way to prevent mate with  $\text{Rh4}$ . A very pretty combination. Contrary to what I said above, all the black pieces turned out to be on the wrong squares!

#### Game 16

Garcia Padron   
Las Palmas 1979

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 b6 4 Bg2 Bb7 5 0-0 e6 6 Ne3 Be7

Writing in his excellent book *Dynamic Chess Strategy*, Suba describes 6...a6 as 'most elastic' here. However, White can then avoid the Hedgehog with  $7 \text{b3} \text{ Be7} 8 \text{Bb2} 0-0 9 \text{e3?}$  with the aim of proving that 6...a6 is an irrelevant move.

7 d4 exd4 8 Qxd4 d6 9 e4

## Starting Out: The English

A more direct approach than 9 b3. Note, however, that White could have played the 'modern' 7 Re1 ■■■ 8 e4 a6 ■ d4 cxd4 10 Nxd4 as in the Psakhis game below, when he reaches a similar position to the game but with a knight on d4 rather than the queen. That is probably a better way for White to play.

**9...a6**

As White hasn't played 9 b3 there is as yet no threat of Ba3. Hence this nudge of the pawn, which prevents Nb5, is okay here.

**10 b3 Nbd7 11 Bb2 0-0 12 Rac1 Qb8**

Suba suggested the better deployment was 12...Qc7 followed by ...Rac8 and ...Qb8, when Black can keep the other rook for action in the centre – particularly for the purpose of harassing the white queen with possible discovered attacks after the centre has been opened.

**13 Nd2 Rc8 14 h3 Bf8**

There begins a long manoeuvring phase, with White unable to find any forceful plan. He simply moves his pieces around. No real damage is done to his position as Black also manoeuvres quietly. Nevertheless Black's manoeuvres seem slightly more purposeful as he gets his bishop to a nice square on g7.

**15 Rfd1**

Black has moved all his heavy pieces away from the kingside so it would be logical for White to begin an attack there. But how? Certainly not by playing a routine centralising move such as this, which takes the rook away from the 'attacking' f1-square! The immediate 15 f4? allows 16...d5!, a thematic response which is tremendous here as 16 cxd5?? Bc8 drops the queen. Another pawn thrust is 15 g4, but 15...g6 is safe enough as 16 g5 e5 (even stronger might be 16...Nh5) 17 Qe3 Nh5 leaves the black knight pointing at the f4-square. So perhaps 15 Kh1 was the best idea, getting the king out of the potential pin, when 15...Bc6 16 f4 begins an attack.

**15...Bc6 16 Qe8 Ra7 17 Nf3 Ba8 18 Nd4 Re8 19 Qd3 g6 20 Kh2 Bg7 21 Nde2? (Diagram 8)**

After a series of insipid but undamaging moves White finally cracks and plays a move which is insipid and bad! Under ■■■ circumstances should he have let Black advance the b-pawn. He had to carry on marking time, for example with 21 Re1. Of course it is psychologically very difficult to continue to do nothing.

**21...b5!**

After waiting patiently throughout the tiresome manoeuvring phase, Suba pounces on White's mistake.

**22 exb5 axb5**

By liquidating the c4-pawn Black has loosened his opponent's grip on d5, which clears the way for a second, even more powerful pawn break with ...d6-d5. This second pawn break will be abetted by ...b5-b4, which drives the knight from c3 and ■■■ weakens White's control of

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     5 e3 J2  
 2...Ne6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Nc3 e5 J3  
 5...e6 J4  
 5...Nf6 J5

---

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---

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 2...Ne6 3 Ne3 Nd4 J4  
 3 d4  
 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 g3  
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---

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---

- 1 c4 c6 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 b6 4 Bg2 Bb7 5 0-0 e6  
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